EFM

ESSENTIAL FLEET MANAGER *Magazine*

For fleet professionals operating within the **Public Sector, Housing, Utilities** *and* **Infrastructure Management**

ISSUE 4
2026

Special Feature:

Vehicle Management

Fleet in Focus:

Cadent

***With* Matt Fitton**, *Fleet & Logistics Manager North West*

FMG THINKING AHEAD

Supplier Insight: **FMG** *Pages (16 to 17)*

EFG ESSENTIAL FLEET GROUP LTD

Essential Fleet Manager Magazine

ISSUE 4 (2026)

Essential Fleet Manager Magazine is a dedicated publication for the professionals responsible for keeping the UK's essential services moving. From emergency services and healthcare to utilities, local authorities and infrastructure providers, fleet operators play a crucial role in ensuring vehicles remain safe, compliant and operational.

The magazine is designed to support these responsibilities by delivering practical insights, industry news and expert perspectives on the issues shaping today's fleet sector. Whether addressing compliance, sustainability, technology, vehicle procurement or driver management, our aim is to provide information that helps fleet professionals make informed decisions and prepare for future challenges.

By bringing together contributions from fleet operators, manufacturers, suppliers and industry experts, **Essential Fleet Manager Magazine** serves as a platform for knowledge-sharing, innovation and collaboration across the sector.

We hope you enjoy this issue and find it both informative and valuable.

CONTENTS

SPECIAL FEATURE: VEHICLE MANAGEMENT

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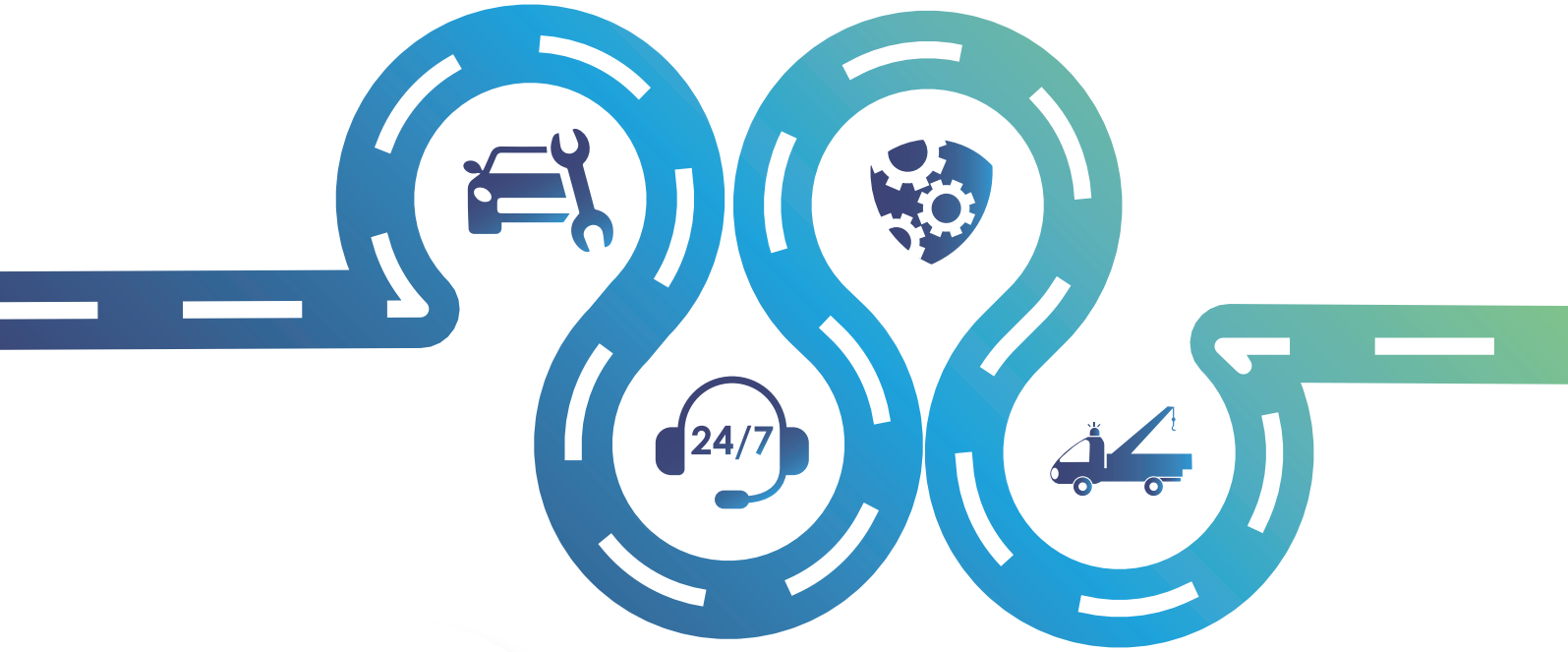

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DVSA Issues Updated Guidance on Tyre Defects for HGVs, Buses and Trailers

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency has published updated guidance aimed at helping operators, fleet managers and maintenance providers make more consistent decisions around tyre wear, defects and damage on HGVs, buses and trailers.

The revised guidance, updated in April 2026, sets out how tyre defects are assessed during roadside inspections and annual tests, while reinforcing the importance of proactive vehicle maintenance and daily walkaround checks.

Focus on Consistency and Road Safety

According to the DVSA, the guidance is intended to improve road safety, reduce disputes around borderline tyre conditions, and help prevent roadworthy tyres from being replaced unnecessarily.

The document covers a wide range of tyre-related issues, including:

- Irregular tread wear
- Sidewall abrasion
- Exposed cords
- Cuts and bulges
- Tread separation
- Tyre age compliance
- Incorrect regrooving

It also outlines the different enforcement outcomes that could result from defects being identified during roadside inspections or MOT testing, ranging from advisory notices through to immediate prohibitions.

Clarification on Tread Depth Rules

One of the key updates clarifies that the legal minimum tread depth requirement of 1mm across three-quarters of the tyre tread applies not only to HGVs over 3.5 tonnes, but also to public service vehicles carrying more than eight passengers.

The guidance also reinforces that exposed cords, tread separation and structural damage remain among the most serious defects and are likely to result in immediate prohibition notices due to the potential risk of tyre failure.

Greater Scrutiny on Ageing Tyres

The updated document highlights continued enforcement around tyre age legislation, particularly for front-steered axles on HGVs and single-wheel minibus configurations, where tyres over 10 years old are prohibited.

The DVSA states that tyre age codes must remain visible and legible to allow proper inspection and compliance checks.

Daily Checks Remain Critical

The publication sits alongside wider DVSA guidance on maintaining commercial vehicle roadworthiness and reinforces the importance of regular inspections, defect reporting and preventative maintenance programmes.

Across the haulage industry, drivers and technicians continue to highlight the operational risks associated with kerb strikes, sidewall damage and missed defects during daily checks. Discussions within the trucking community regularly point to tyre damage and poor maintenance as common causes of roadside prohibitions and vehicle downtime.

Pressure on Operators to Maintain Compliance

For fleet operators, the updated guidance serves as another reminder that tyre management remains one of the most safety-critical aspects of commercial vehicle operation.

With roadside enforcement continuing to target vehicle condition and maintenance standards, operators are being encouraged to ensure drivers understand inspection requirements and that maintenance teams apply consistent assessment criteria when identifying tyre damage.

The full guidance includes photographic examples of defects alongside explanations of how each issue is likely to be treated during enforcement inspections and MOT testing.●

For more information, the DVSA guidance can be viewed on https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tyre-defects-and-damage-hgvs-buses-and-trailers/tyre-defects-and-damage-hgvs-buses-and-trailers?

Business Mileage Rate Increased to 55p Per Mile

The government has confirmed a significant increase to HMRC business mileage rates, with Chancellor Rachel Reeves announcing a 10p rise to the Approved Mileage Allowance Payment (AMAP) for the first 10,000 business miles travelled.

Under the revised structure, drivers using their own vehicles for work will now be able to claim 55p per mile for the first 10,000 business miles, up from the long-standing 45p rate that has remained frozen since 2011. The lower 25p per mile rate for mileage exceeding 10,000 business miles will remain unchanged.

The increase is expected to provide some financial relief for employees and fleet operators facing continued pressure from rising fuel prices, insurance premiums, maintenance costs and overall vehicle operating expenses.

The AMAP system is widely used across company fleets, grey fleet operations and field-based organisations to reimburse employees using privately owned vehicles for business travel. Fleet industry groups and trade unions have repeatedly argued that the previous mileage rates no longer reflected the true cost of motoring, particularly as vehicle technology and ownership costs have evolved significantly over the past decade.

For fleet operators, the revised mileage allowance may also influence wider reimbursement strategies, vehicle policies and grey fleet management approaches. Many businesses have increasingly focused on reducing unnecessary mileage, improving route planning and encouraging the adoption of lower-emission vehicles as operational costs continue to rise.

The revised 55p rate is expected to apply from the current tax year, marking the first increase to the HMRC mileage allowance structure in more than 15 years. While the change will be welcomed by many drivers and employers, it is also expected to encourage organisations to review business travel policies, reimbursement processes and wider fleet efficiency measures as operating costs remain under close scrutiny.●

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Fleet in Focus: Cadent

Powering Britain's Gas Network: Inside Cadent's Fleet Strategy Supporting Safety, Efficiency and Innovation

Pictured: ***Matt Fitton****, Fleet & Logistics Manager for Cadent's North West network*

Introduction

Cadent is the UK's largest gas distribution network, responsible for maintaining and operating the infrastructure that delivers gas safely and reliably to more than 11 million homes and businesses. Its network spans the North West of England, West Midlands, East Midlands, East of England and North London, with operations focused across three key areas: network infrastructure, emergency response and customer repairs.

Supporting these essential services is a large and diverse fleet of more than 3,000 vehicles, aligned operationally with these core business functions.

Matt Fitton, Fleet & Logistics Manager for Cadent's North West network, is responsible for more than 750 of those vehicle assets and their drivers. Essential Fleet Manager Magazine spoke to Matt about his demanding role, which focuses on operational efficiency to ensure the delivery of vital services, safety and compliance, and an ongoing commitment to driving improvements through innovation and stakeholder engagement.

Interview

Q: Could you tell us about what a typical day for you involves? What are the everyday challenges?

As a Fleet and Logistics Manager at Cadent, no two days are the same. I regularly liaise with key stakeholders across the business to understand and resolve a wide range of operational issues, from Area Managers handling VORs to engineers reporting vehicle faults, and our Local Delivery Partners (LDPs) supporting day-to-day logistics.

I also work closely with our planning team to ensure compliance activities and the Key 4 Key programme are effectively scheduled within engineers' workloads. Alongside this, I engage with our supply network to strengthen partnerships and continually improve our operations, with a constant focus on maximising vehicle availability and minimising downtime across the fleet.

Q: What is the current make-up of your vehicle fleet and broadly, what services do they support?

In the North West, we operate a fleet of 768 LCVs and 12 HGVs, comprising three Vacuum Excavators, three Whale Tankers, four 7.5-tonne box bodies and two MEG trucks.

Around 10% of the North West fleet is now electric, including a mixture of Vauxhall Vivaro Es and Maxus ED7 and ED9 models. The majority of these vehicles are operated by our First Call Operatives (FCOs), the engineers who attend site within an hour of a gas leak being reported in order to trace the leak.

We also run around 280 PTO vehicles, made up of Mercedes-Benz Sprinters, Ivecos and Ford Transits. These traditional PTO systems provide engineers with compressed air and power and are primarily used by our Repair teams, who, once a leak has been detected, begin the repair process on the gas infrastructure.

The remainder of the North West fleet includes barrier vans, flatbeds, pick-up trucks and car-derived vehicles used across a range of operational functions, including Energy

Operations, Customer Care, Land Liaison and other support services.

Q: With many of your vehicles having undergone complex fit-outs and operating in often challenging environments, which present the greatest SMR challenge?

At Cadent, we operate as efficiently as possible as a regulated business and, as a result, we do not carry spare vehicles within the fleet. One of our biggest challenges is therefore ensuring the supply chain fully understands the need to return vehicles to the road in a timely manner.

As mentioned, many of our vehicles feature specialist fit-outs and components, so identifying the correct manufacturer or repairer for each element is critical in helping to expedite the process. This often means repairs can be directed straight to the appropriate garage or manufacturer, reducing unnecessary delays and downtime.

Another significant challenge at the moment is dealership booking availability. We are finding that many manufacturers are operating with lead times of three to four weeks before a booking date can even be provided, which can result in unwarranted vehicle downtime and operational disruption.

Q: You have already successfully transitioned a significant part of your fleet to Electric Vehicles (EVs) and although you are ahead of set objectives, which vehicles remain a challenge and why?

I don't think it is necessarily a question of which vehicles present the challenge. It is more about transitioning our operation and the way we work to give EVs the best possible opportunity to thrive within the business.

We are regulated to attend a gas escape within one hour of the leak being reported. While many of our engineers have home charging installed, challenges arise where this is not available. In these instances, engineers rely on the public charging infrastructure, which means additional time must be built into daily schedules to accommodate charging requirements.

EV technology has also developed significantly since our initial deployment of Vauxhall Vivaros. As we are now seeing with the Maxus ED7 and ED9 models, increased range and improved capability are helping us to overcome many of the operational challenges we previously experienced.

Q: When replacing vehicles, what is your process for engaging with operatives, other departments and suppliers to ensure you achieve the best possible solutions?

At Cadent, we create a dedicated working group whenever we redesign a vehicle conversion. The process begins by identifying the most suitable vehicle make and model, followed by monthly meetings to review current conversion designs, discuss operational issues and identify potential improvements.

These working groups are typically made up of one or two Fleet & Logistics Managers, engineers representing each of our five operational areas, and central functions such as the commercial team. Together, the group oversees the design and build process through to completion.

Having all key stakeholders involved throughout the decision-making process helps ensure the final solution meets operational requirements and makes final approvals more straightforward and efficient for our supply chain partners.

Q: Are there any challenges or conflicts in balancing operational requirements with targets and budgets set by OFGEM?

We always strive to operate as efficiently as possible as a business. Our budgets are set over five-year regulatory periods under OFGEM's RIIO framework.

Having recently completed RIIO-2, we are now operating within RIIO-3, which runs from April 2026 through to April 2031. This provides us with agreed budgets for the full five-year period, allowing us to plan vehicle replacements, fleet investment and operational improvements well in advance.

Operationally, the biggest challenge remains ensuring our First Call Operatives (FCOs) can attend a reported gas leak within one hour, particularly as we continue to introduce EVs into the fleet. However, we are now well advanced on our electrification journey and are gathering valuable operational data and feedback that is helping us continually improve and refine our EV deployment across the network.

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"It is not just about the vehicles. It is about transitioning our operation and the way we work to give EVs the best opportunity to thrive."

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Q: A large part of safety, efficiency and risk reduction is derived from how you manage drivers. What is your approach and what technology are you utilising to assist?

Ultimately, we want all colleagues to go home in the same condition they arrived in at the start of their shift. At Cadent, the safety and well-being of our engineers and wider workforce are taken extremely seriously, and our approach to driver management reflects that priority.

To support this, we work with our supply chain partner, TTC, to manage training schedules and licence compliance. TTC conducts initial driver risk assessments for all drivers, including company car users, to identify individual risk profiles and ensure appropriate, tailored training is assigned. In addition, supervisors and managers can proactively book further development courses through the system, including advanced driving and towing training where required.

Alongside this, we have established a dedicated Safe Driving Group covering all five networks. The group, made up of managers and supervisors, meets monthly to review the previous month's incident data and discuss specific safe driving themes. This ensures lessons are shared consistently across the organisation and continuously fed back into our approach to improving safety and reducing risk across the fleet.

Q: Could you expand on any challenges when implementing driver monitoring technology?

As with most new technologies, the introduction of driver monitoring systems can naturally raise questions and concerns among employees. In a large fleet operation, it can be easy for new technologies and policies to be perceived as imposed without sufficient engagement or consultation.

At Cadent, we place significant importance on communication and collaboration throughout the implementation process. We regularly engage with our Trade Unions to better understand the concerns, expectations and requirements of their members, ensuring that feedback is considered as part of any rollout.

This collaborative approach helps build trust and understanding around new technologies while ensuring that any solutions introduced support both operational safety and colleague well-being.

Q: Cadent has a reputation for adopting innovations that improve operational efficiency, sustainability and safety. Could you mention some key examples and are there any solutions not yet available that you are keen to see come to the market?

As a business, we are open to adopting new technologies and supporting their development, working closely with our supply chain and internal teams to design solutions that meet our operational needs.

One example we are particularly proud of is our collaboration with Picarro. Together, we have developed and installed Advanced Leak Detection (ALD) systems on Skoda Enyaq vehicles. These are deployed across Cadent's network, enabling engineers to drive routes while specialist equipment detects methane in the atmosphere.

When methane is detected, the system generates an in-vehicle alert on a tablet, pinpointing the exact location. The driver can then record the information, with coordinates automatically sent back to Cadent. This allows us to take a more proactive approach to network management, identifying and investigating potential leaks before they are reported, rather than solely reacting to calls after a leak has already been detected.

We are also actively exploring the future of the PTO (Power Take-Off) vehicle. With traditional ICE vehicles expected to be phased out in line with government policy by 2030, there remains a clear operational requirement for compressed air and onboard power within an EV environment.

We are currently involved in a number of trials in this space, and I believe this is a key area for future innovation. Greater collaboration across the market will be essential to develop scalable solutions that allow us to fully replicate current functionality in an electric fleet environment without compromising operational capability.

Q: What do you see as the challenges of the next 2 years and what improvements will you be seeking?

I think the fleet sector is likely to face emerging challenges over the next two years, particularly as the transition to electric vehicles continues. As demand rises, bottlenecks could form in the supply chain, and manufacturers and local garages will need to upskill mechanics to work on EVs, which could, in turn, affect repair turnaround times. Alongside this, the availability of key components and materials, including the long-term supply of lithium, may also put pressure on lead times and fleet resilience.

Cost will also remain a significant factor. Many fleets will need to carefully balance capital investment decisions against ongoing OPEX spend, particularly given the higher upfront cost of EVs compared with traditional ICE vehicles, even where whole-life savings may be achievable.

In addition, the balance between vehicle weight and payload capacity is likely to become an increasing operational challenge, particularly for fleets carrying specialist equipment. This will need to be carefully managed to ensure vehicles remain compliant while still meeting operational requirements and supporting wider decarbonisation targets set by the government.●

Part of the TTC Group

Cadent Empowers Fleet Drivers by Creating a Safety-First Culture with TTC

There's always room to improve fleet safety. For Cadent, the UK's largest gas distribution network, protecting employees on the road is a key part of its wider commitment to health, safety and wellbeing. Over the past year, its partnership with TTC has helped strengthen driver safety, improve compliance and deliver measurable business benefits.

By combining automated compliance processes with targeted driver training and greater driver accountability, Cadent has reduced incidents, lowered accident and insurance costs and laid the foundations for a more proactive, competence-led approach to fleet safety.

Indeed, after the first year of its partnership with TTC, Cadent reduced its annual average claims cost by 28%.

Cadent operates a diverse fleet comprising 3,000 commercial vehicles, including 500 electric vehicles, 50 HGVs and 1,100 company cars which are electric and PHEV. Around 14% of its driver population are grey fleet drivers.

Since April 2025, Cadent has worked with TTC to improve safety for operational and office-based fleet drivers, including grey fleet drivers. The collaboration has focused on improving visibility and compliance through licence checking, while ensuring targeted training is provided to higher-risk drivers.

Creating Compliance Confidence

Moving from manual processes to automated licence and grey fleet checks has transformed Cadent's approach to compliance. The introduction of TTC's Continuum platform provides consistent licence validation, identifies higher-risk drivers and signposts appropriate training, while delivering a clear end-to-end audit trail.

The platform also simplifies grey fleet compliance by ensuring vehicles are roadworthy, insured and taxed, while confirming drivers are legally entitled to drive.

"Working in partnership with TTC has been a pivotal step in strengthening Cadent's commitment to a safety-first culture across our entire fleet," says Louise Crosskill, Fleet & Logistics Operations Project Manager at Cadent.

"Over the past year, we've moved beyond traditional compliance processes and embraced a far more proactive, data-led approach to driver safety. The introduction of the Continuum platform has given us real confidence in our compliance, with automated licence and grey fleet checks providing both visibility and assurance, while significantly reducing administrative burden."

Putting Drivers in Control

To strengthen engagement and help close compliance gaps, Cadent introduced TTC's Permit to Drive system. Working with TTC, Cadent established the requirements drivers must meet, including ensuring documents and training remain up to date.

Continuum then works with drivers to gather, verify and maintain documentation before issuing a Permit to Drive once compliance has been confirmed.

The simple, intuitive process has proved highly effective, enabling drivers to manage their own compliance while giving the fleet team complete visibility of driver safety and compliance performance. Permit-to-drive rates consistently remain around 98%.

...cont'd on page **10**

...cont'd from page **09**

Raising the Bar on Driver Risk Management

With compliance processes firmly established, Cadent has focused on driver competence and risk management.

Initially, training targeted drivers with six or more licence points, probationary licence holders and those with less than two years' experience. The programme has since expanded to include additional higher-risk drivers identified through annual risk assessments and driver profiling.

A combination of e-learning and on-road training helps meet the needs of Cadent's diverse driver population. With a company car fleet consisting of sustainable vehicles, EV familiarisation and first-time EV driver support are increasingly important.

Other drivers require specialist training, including Trailer Towing courses, while post-collision training helps drivers learn from incidents and build confidence.

Managers and local teams monitor completion rates and progress, while the fleet safety team shares updates with operational safety teams, directors and regional leads.

Building a Competence-Led Future

Regular performance reporting at senior leadership and director-level meetings helps maintain accountability and encourages healthy competition between business areas.

The relationship between Cadent and TTC continues to evolve, with TTC adapting support to address emerging trends.

For example, when Cadent identified an increase in low-speed collisions, TTC temporarily replaced automated e-learning with a manually assigned training module focused specifically on that issue.

Looking ahead, Cadent is moving towards a more competence-led model of driver safety. Future plans include enhancing driver competence assessments, using training more proactively to target support before incidents occur and expanding higher-risk driver interventions beyond traditional categories.

Employee engagement, active support from the Cadent board and continued development of the Continuum platform all underline a long-term commitment to improving fleet safety.

"Cadent's results speak for themselves, with measurable reductions in incidents and claims costs, but just as importantly, they are seeing a genuine cultural shift," says Katie Wright, Chief Revenue Officer, TTC Group.

"Safety is no longer a reactive process, it's embedded in everyday behaviours. As we continue working with Cadent as it moves towards a competence-led model, our partnership will remain central to driving continuous improvement and keeping its people safe on the road."●

"By combining data-led risk management with practical driver training, Cadent continues to reduce incidents and strengthen operational safety."

Looking to reduce incidents and improve driver performance? Visit **www.thettcgroup.com** *or email* **sales@ttc-uk.com**

AFP chair Paul Hollick

Decarbonisation, AI and **Rising Costs** Dominate **AFP Annual Conference**

The key challenges facing the fleet sector over the next 12 months were placed firmly under the spotlight at this year's Annual Conference of the Association of Fleet Professionals (AFP).

Held in May at the British Motor Museum and sponsored by Ayvens and Farizon, the event attracted a record audience of more than 300 delegates from across the fleet and mobility sector.

Opening the conference, AFP chair Paul Hollick identified the industry's biggest priorities as decarbonisation, cost control, fleet safety, emerging technologies, mobility, autonomous vehicles and artificial intelligence.

"These are crucial topics," he said. *"We need to continue driving decarbonisation through electrification now rather than leaving it to the next generation. A great deal of progress has already been made, but there is still more to do.*

"Costs are always a major issue, but recent geopolitical events, including the situation in Iran, have brought financial pressures into even sharper focus. Almost every fleet operator here today will have had conversations with finance departments in recent months."

Hollick also highlighted the growing importance of AI and autonomous vehicle technology within fleet operations.

"Fleet managers who fail to maximise the potential of AI risk being left behind," he said. *"At the same time, autonomous vehicles are arriving faster than many anticipated and are already being tested in the UK ahead of commercial operation later this year."*

The AFP revealed membership had grown by 5% during the past year, taking total membership close to 2,000, with the organisation targeting a further 10% increase over the coming 12 months.

Hollick pointed to several developments introduced by the AFP over the past year, including the launch of the AFP app, a shared charging platform, additional Fleet Academy training courses and the creation of a dedicated lobbying role.

He also underlined the importance of the AFP's committees covering decarbonisation, mega fleets, risk and compliance, mobility, and diversity and leadership.

"These forums are vital for discussing current industry issues, sharing best practice and identifying practical solutions that can benefit the wider fleet sector," he added.

Future plans for the AFP will focus heavily on attracting new talent into the profession through mentoring, work experience and skills development initiatives.

"We cannot overstate the importance of promoting fleet management as a career," said Hollick. *"Many experienced leaders in the sector are approaching retirement and there is a real danger that a generation of knowledge and expertise could be lost."*

The conference keynote address was delivered by Ben Banfield, head of vehicle policy, consumer and strategy at the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles, who discussed government policy surrounding electric vehicles.

Artificial intelligence was another major talking point during the event, with AFP board director James Pestell delivering a presentation on AI's growing role in fleet management, including a live demonstration.

"There is understandable concern around AI within the industry," he said. *"But the real question is not whether AI will replace fleet professionals, but how it can help them become more effective.*

"Fleet operations generate vast amounts of data, often spread across multiple systems. AI has the potential to interpret, interrogate and summarise that information in ways that allow fleet managers to move from reactive management towards more proactive decision-making."

The government's planned Electric Vehicle Excise Duty (eVED) also came under criticism during the conference.

Adam Forshaw, head of communications at the British Vehicle Rental and Leasing Association (BVRLA), warned the proposed tax could damage EV adoption across both fleet and private markets.

"This is the wrong tax at the wrong time," he said. *"It risks slowing the momentum behind the EV market by adding cost and complexity for buyers. For fleets, the implications are even greater because of the scale involved."*

A legislation panel featuring Dale Eynon echoed those concerns, warning that eVED could become a significant barrier to fleet electrification if introduced in its current form in 2028.

The conference also recognised achievement within the sector through the AFP Fleet Academy Awards, presented by Ronnie Gillman.

Karla Brown of Anglian Water and Amy Webster of City Electrical Factors won awards in the strategic fleet vehicle management category, while Christian Mullings of SGN won the advanced fleet vehicle management category.

Other AFP Fleet Academy students recognised for completing the strategic fleet vehicle management course included Mary Barlow, Kyle Bayes, Lee Blackmore, Mark Dawson, Beckie Edwards, Callum Gates, Lisa Gough, Patricia Latham, Jennifer Maidment, Emma Plested, Jordan Walsh and Amy Webster.

Also becoming AFP Fellows after completing the advanced fleet vehicle management course were Adina Bostioca, Christian Mullings, Martin O'Neill and Tim Sykes.●

To find out more about the AFP visit: **www.theafp.co.uk/**

The **Operational Reality** of **Managing** a **Vehicle Fleet**

From an outsider's perspective, fleet management can appear relatively straightforward. Vehicles are purchased or leased, maintained, fuelled, repaired and eventually replaced when they reach the end of their operational life.

For fleet managers, however, the reality is far more complex. Behind every operational fleet is usually a small team, and often just one individual, responsible for keeping vehicles safe, compliant, available and cost-effective, while ensuring frontline services continue to operate without disruption.

Whether supporting housing maintenance teams, healthcare workers, utility engineers, highways operations or local authorities, fleet managers are often the unseen professionals coordinating and sustaining critical day-to-day operations. Yet much of what modern fleet management involves remains underestimated or poorly understood outside the sector itself.

Far More Than "Looking After Vehicles"

The role of the fleet manager has evolved significantly over the last decade. What was once viewed by some organisations as largely administrative has become one of the most demanding and wide-ranging operational functions within many businesses.

Today's fleet managers are expected to oversee:

- Vehicle compliance
- Driver safety and duty of care
- Workshop coordination
- Procurement and vehicle lifecycle planning
- Maintenance scheduling
- Insurance and incident management
- Telematics and data reporting
- Supplier management
- Sustainability and EV transition planning
- Budget control and cost reduction

Alongside these responsibilities, managers are expected to minimise downtime, maintain service delivery, respond to operational pressures and adapt to constantly evolving legislation and technology.

In reality, the role extends far beyond managing vehicles alone. Fleet managers regularly balance the expectations of senior leadership teams, operational departments, drivers, suppliers and compliance requirements, often simultaneously.

One of the less recognised aspects of the profession is the breadth of skills it demands. Few operational roles combine compliance, finance, procurement, technology, logistics and people management in the same way. For many within the industry, this variety, combined with the knowledge that fleets directly support essential frontline services, is one of the reasons they remain passionate about the profession.

The Pressure of Keeping Vehicles Available

One of the greatest pressures facing fleet managers is maintaining vehicle availability.

When vehicles are unexpectedly off the road, the impact quickly spreads beyond the fleet department. Repairs may be delayed, appointments missed, operational teams disrupted and customer service affected.

For essential service organisations, that pressure can be relentless. Fleet managers are often balancing ageing vehicles, rising repair costs, parts shortages, workshop capacity constraints and tighter budgets, all while trying to keep operations moving smoothly.

The challenge is compounded by the fact that vehicles are no longer simple mechanical assets. Modern fleets now involve connected technologies,

telematics systems, cameras, driver monitoring tools and increasingly complex powertrains, particularly as organisations transition towards electric vehicles.

As a result, diagnosing faults, managing maintenance schedules and planning replacement strategies has become significantly more complicated than many outside the industry realise.

Despite these pressures, many fleet professionals take genuine pride in the role. There is considerable satisfaction in knowing the decisions made within the fleet department directly support frontline services and help keep employees and the public safe.

Compliance Pressure Never Goes Away

One of the least visible aspects of fleet management is the level of compliance responsibility carried every day.

Fleet operations are heavily regulated, and failures can have serious legal, financial and reputational consequences. Fleet managers are responsible for ensuring vehicles are inspected, maintained and operated safely, while also managing documentation, audit trails and reporting procedures.

Following a serious incident, investigators may review:

- Vehicle maintenance histories
- Defect reporting records
- Inspection schedules
- Driver licence checks
- Workshop procedures
- Driver training records
- Management oversight processes

As a result, fleet managers often operate with the constant awareness that if something goes wrong, scrutiny may extend directly to them and their department.

For many within the profession, this creates significant pressure behind the scenes, particularly within fleets operating around the clock under demanding conditions.

Managing Drivers Remains One of the Hardest Parts of the Role

While technology now plays a major role in fleet management, many experienced professionals still say the most difficult aspect of the job is managing the human element.

Drivers themselves are often working under intense pressure. Tight schedules, staffing shortages and operational demands can lead to daily vehicle checks being rushed or defects being reported late.

Fleet managers therefore spend much of their time balancing operational realities with safety and compliance responsibilities.

Some drivers take great pride in their vehicles and report issues immediately. Others may delay reporting damage, ignore warning lights or continue operating vehicles with developing faults because they are focused on completing workloads.

The difficulty is that small issues can quickly escalate into major risks. An overlooked tyre defect or delayed repair may eventually lead to vehicle downtime, costly breakdowns or serious safety concerns.

At the same time, many fleet managers recognise that strong relationships with drivers are essential. Fleets generally operate more effectively when drivers see the fleet department as a source of support rather than simply enforcement.

Technology Has Helped, But Also Increased Expectations

Telematics, connected fleet systems, vehicle cameras and predictive maintenance platforms have transformed fleet management in recent years.

These technologies provide far greater operational visibility, allowing fleet managers to monitor vehicle usage, driver behaviour, fuel consumption, servicing schedules and compliance data in real time.

However, technology has also increased expectations.

Fleet managers are now expected not only to manage operations, but also to interpret large volumes of data, produce detailed reporting and justify decisions using performance metrics.

In many organisations, fleet departments are being asked to improve efficiency, reduce emissions, lower operating costs and strengthen compliance simultaneously. While technology can support those goals, it does not remove the pressure of ensuring vehicles remain operational every day.

Recognition Still Lags Behind Responsibility

One of the recurring frustrations across the sector is that the complexity of the fleet manager's role is still underestimated in some organisations. Fleet is often viewed primarily as a cost centre rather than a critical operational function supporting frontline services and organisational resilience. As a result, many fleet managers carry enormous responsibility without always receiving the staffing support, investment or recognition the role deserves.

Yet despite the pressures, many people remain deeply committed to the profession because they understand the importance of what they do. No two days are ever the same, and the decisions made within fleet departments directly affect service delivery, driver safety and operational performance.

Building Stronger Internal Relationships

Fleet operations influence almost every part of an organisation, from finance and procurement through to HR, health and safety, compliance and frontline service delivery.

Because of this, fleet managers who build strong internal relationships are often better positioned to influence decisions, secure investment and resolve operational challenges more effectively.

Improved communication across departments also helps ensure vehicle-related decisions support wider organisational objectives, rather than fleet being treated as a standalone support function or simple cost centre.

Visibility within the organisation is equally important. When leadership teams better understand the pressures, risks and responsibilities involved in managing a modern fleet, fleet managers are more likely to be recognised as strategic contributors to operational resilience and service delivery.

The Bigger Picture

Modern fleet management is no longer simply about keeping vehicles on the road.

It is about maintaining operational continuity, managing risk, supporting drivers, controlling costs, ensuring compliance and helping organisations deliver essential services safely and efficiently.

And behind all of that is the fleet manager, often balancing competing pressures, solving problems quietly behind the scenes and carrying responsibilities that many outside the industry never fully see.●

Vehicle Maintenance: If It's **Not Written Down**, It **Never Happened**!?

Chris Harrington
Associate Legal Director and Solicitor
CE Transport Law

When it comes to running commercial vehicles, maintenance is about far more than keeping wheels turning. Effective vehicle maintenance is fundamental to safety, compliance, operational efficiency, and protecting your business reputation.

A robust maintenance regime helps reduce the risk of breakdowns, roadside prohibitions, and road traffic collisions. It minimises costly downtime, keeps vehicles on the road, and can even improve fuel economy and reduce emissions. Most importantly, it helps protect drivers, passengers, and other road users by reducing the risks of mechanical failures that could lead to serious incidents.

For operators, strong maintenance practices also demonstrate a commitment to meeting legal obligations and maintaining effective control over their fleet.

The Defect Most Likely to Attract DVSA Attention

If you were to guess the most common defect resulting in a DVSA prohibition, what would it be?

The answer is tyres.

According to DVSA statistics, tyre-related defects consistently rank among the most common reasons vehicles receive prohibitions. This should come as no surprise. Tyres are the only part of a vehicle that remains in constant contact with the road surface, making them subject to continual wear and tear.

However, tyre condition is only part of the story.

The overall condition of a vehicle and the manner in which it is being driven often influence whether a vehicle attracts the attention of enforcement officers in the first place. A clean, well-presented vehicle sends a powerful message. Human nature being what it is, a vehicle that appears well maintained externally is less likely to raise immediate suspicions rather than a vehicle that looks neglected.

That is why preventative maintenance is so important. Replacing worn components before they fail and keeping on top of routine servicing can significantly reduce the likelihood of both defects and unwanted roadside inspections.

Your Driver: The First Line of Defence

One of the most effective tools in any maintenance programme is the daily walk-around check.

While many operators associate these checks with heavy goods vehicles, there is a strong argument that light commercial vehicles should follow exactly the same discipline. Just 10 minutes spent inspecting a vehicle before it leaves the depot can identify issues before they become serious safety or compliance concerns.

Drivers are often the first to notice defects developing. They are your frontline defence against small problems becoming major failures.

Regular inspections should not stop there. Transport managers and supervisors should also conduct periodic checks to identify obvious signs of wear, damage, or poor maintenance standards across the fleet.

Most importantly, these checks must be documented.

If the DVSA investigates your operation, you will be expected to demonstrate what checks were carried out, when they were completed, and what action was taken to address any defects identified.

As I frequently remind clients:

"If it's not written down, it never happened."

Documentation Alone Is Not Enough

Many operators believe that maintaining records is sufficient to satisfy regulatory requirements. Unfortunately, this is a common and potentially costly misconception.

Too often, maintenance paperwork is simply filed away without being properly

reviewed. This can expose you to risk if there is something on the preventative maintenance inspection (PMI) which would have alerted you to a potential issue with the vehicle:

1. Roadworthiness Declaration not signed
2. Tyre underinflated / cut to cords and needs to be replaced
3. Driver reportable defects that need to be raised with the driver

Traffic Commissioners regularly hear operators say that maintenance documentation is reviewed, but that no record is kept of that review. That explanation rarely carries much weight, particularly where there are issues apparent which would have presented themselves on a proper review.

What regulators want to see is evidence of active management and scrutiny.

Has the PMI form been completed correctly? Are basic details such as vehicle mileage, operator name, inspection dates, and ISO week numbers recorded accurately? Is the PMI form up to date and includes recent changes like tyre age?

These seemingly minor details demonstrate effective and continuous control over the operation.

Proving Effective Oversight

Reviewing maintenance records should be a visible and auditable process.

In practical terms, this could be as simple as using a highlighter or red pen to mark items requiring attention before signing off the document. Alternatively, operators may choose to implement a separate audit sheet that is completed following each PMI review.

Whatever system you adopt, it should clearly demonstrate that maintenance documentation has been actively examined and assessed. This is not just about doing it for the sake of it but actively seeking to understand what you can learn from a review of your documents.

You need to perform the same exercise that will be performed by the DVSA examiner or Traffic Commissioner, who will scrutinise your records in granular form in the event of an incident. That way, you know what the issues are before anyone else.

"We Only Operate Vans" – Are We Still on DVSA's Radar?

A common misconception among van operators is that enforcement activity is primarily focused on HGVs.

The reality is quite different.

The DVSA has an interest in all commercial vehicles, regardless of size. While the sheer number of light commercial vehicles on Britain's roads presents challenges for enforcement agencies, operators should not assume that running vans places them below the regulatory radar.

A DVSA examiner is likely to assess the overall condition of a vehicle and look for obvious signs of poor maintenance or non-compliance. Well-maintained vehicles that present professionally are far less likely to attract attention than those displaying visible defects or signs of neglect.

Whether you operate one van or a fleet of articulated vehicles, the principles remain exactly the same: safe vehicles, proper maintenance, and robust record keeping.

What About Electric Vehicles?

As more operators transition to electric fleets, some assume maintenance requirements become less important because EVs have fewer moving parts.

That would be a mistake.

Maintenance remains just as critical for electric commercial vehicles as it does for diesel-powered fleets.

In fact, tyres can be particularly vulnerable on electric vehicles. The additional weight of batteries and the instant torque characteristics of electric drivetrains can place greater stress on tyres, leading to accelerated wear if not properly monitored.

The method of propulsion may be changing, but the fundamentals of vehicle safety and compliance remain unchanged.

Key Message

Good maintenance is about far more than ticking boxes. It protects your drivers, safeguards other road users, reduces operating costs, and helps keep your business compliant.

Most importantly, it provides evidence that you are exercising proper control over your fleet.

Remember, maintenance is not just about carrying out inspections and repairs. It is about demonstrating that they happened.

Because when the regulator comes knocking, one principle always applies….

If it's not written down, it never happened.

If you would like one of our solicitors to review your documentation, call me to set up a meeting.●

FMG

THINKING AHEAD

THE UNTAPPED POTENTIAL OF FLEET DATA

When it comes to computing power, our vehicles are smarter than many offices were just a decade ago. Whilst we drive, our vehicles silently gather and share information from sensors, cameras and onboard computers, from driver behaviour to fuel efficiency and battery health, but there's little value in the numbers alone.

Vehicle data has the potential to reshape the way we drive, maintain our vehicles and devise fleet strategy, but first that vehicle data needs processing, managing and analysing, to allow fleet managers to extract any meaningful information from it.

The future of fleet management will not be defined by who has the most data, but rather who can effectively translate that insight into action. The question can no longer be 'what happened?' but rather ' what should we do next?'

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MAKING YOUR FLEET DATA WORK HARDER

Here at FMG we're helping fleet managers to find the valuable messages within their own data.

Our rich dataset has been generated by daily fleet activity for cars, vans and utilities fleets, multiplied over many years, and it has the power to provide insights into all aspects of fleet performance. To ensure we optimise the potential of our data, we have introduced the data visualisation and analytics software, Microsoft Power BI, to interrogate fleet data at every level and support fleet managers with informed decision making.

Through Power BI, we transform each fleet's own raw data to create a 360-view of market dynamics. It allows us to uncover hidden patterns, identify risks and create genuinely useful insights to support fleet managers with their specific fleet priorities, whether that's improving fleet efficiency, safety or cost control, or making strategic decisions regarding vehicle choice and fuel type.

DATA TO SUPPORT FLEET STRATEGY

A strong fleet strategy must align vehicle operations with the wider business' strategy, and that requires a depth of knowledge and understanding around the current fleet; whole life costs, repair costs, fuel usage and downtime along with inefficiencies and pain points.

The answers lie within your fleet data and we can help you reach them, quickly.

Perhaps you want to make comparisons between your fleet and the wider automotive market:

- Average repair costs by fuel type
- Average downtime of different makes and models
- Off road times for new entrant manufacturer vehicles
- Effectiveness of adaptive safety devices – do they lead to fewer avoidable accidents?

Or perhaps you want to look more closely at incident circumstances within your fleet – is there a correlation between 'driver fault' incidents and fuel type? How does your fleet performance compare with other fleets within your specific industry?

WE HAVE YOUR ANSWERS

Through our wealth of data, and the visualisation of Power BI, we have the answers to support the specific challenges and decisions fleet managers face. The fleet landscape is constantly evolving and so is the value we derive from our data. We're continually adding to our data and creating new drill downs and exploring new trends. We have the answers, and we're here to work through your questions.

End-of-Life Vehicle Planning: The **Fleet Cost** and **Risk Factor** Too Many **Operators Overlook**

Despite its significant impact on operational efficiency and whole-life costs, end-of-life vehicle planning remains an area of fleet management that is often underestimated.

Whether vehicles are owned outright or operated under lease agreements, the decisions made around replacement cycles, disposal methods and contract handbacks can directly influence fleet reliability, maintenance expenditure, vehicle availability and budget control. When managed effectively, end-of-life planning helps minimise downtime, maximise asset value and strengthen long-term fleet resilience.

The Hidden Cost of Keeping Vehicles Too Long

For fleets that own their vehicles, identifying the optimum replacement point is rarely straightforward. While extending a vehicle's service life can appear to deliver valuable short-term savings, particularly during periods of financial pressure, ageing assets often become progressively more expensive to operate and maintain. Workshop visits

become more frequent, fuel efficiency can deteriorate, and reliability issues tend to increase as vehicles accumulate mileage and components reach the end of their service life.

Consequently, any savings achieved by delaying replacement can quickly be eroded by rising maintenance costs, increased downtime and reduced productivity. What initially seems like a sensible cost-control measure can gradually become a drain on operational performance, placing additional pressure on fleet budgets, resources and service delivery.

The challenge is that these costs often build incrementally rather than appearing as a single significant expense. By the time recurring breakdowns, reliability concerns and vehicle availability issues become impossible to ignore, the true financial and operational cost of retaining the asset may already be substantial.

Lease Fleets Face Different — But Equally Serious — Risks

For leased fleets, the risks shift slightly but remain just as important. Excess mileage charges, damage costs, missing equipment, incomplete service records and fair wear and tear disputes can all create sizeable end-of-contract liabilities if vehicles are not managed correctly throughout the lease cycle.

Many operators still leave vehicle preparation until the final weeks before handback, only to uncover avoidable repair issues and condition-related charges that could have been resolved earlier and far more cost-effectively.

Increasingly, the most successful fleets are managing vehicle condition continuously throughout the vehicle lifecycle rather than treating lease return preparation as a last-minute exercise.

Disposal Timing Matters

Residual value is another area where poor timing can quietly erode fleet budgets. Mileage, condition, service history, presentation and market demand all influence vehicle resale performance, and delaying disposal beyond the optimum point can significantly reduce return.

Vehicles that remain in service for too long often experience accelerated depreciation alongside rising operating costs, creating a double financial impact for operators.

The Value of the Right Remarketing Partner

This is where the right auction or remarketing partner can add genuine strategic value. Beyond simply handling disposal, experienced partners can provide guidance on current market conditions, likely resale performance and whether refurbishment work is financially worthwhile prior to sale.

In some cases, relatively minor cosmetic repairs can substantially increase vehicle value, while in others the repair costs may outweigh any potential return. Access to that expertise allows operators to make far more informed disposal decisions.

Data Is Changing Replacement Planning

Technology is also giving fleets far greater visibility over whole-life vehicle performance. Telematics and fleet management systems now allow operators to monitor repair frequency, downtime trends, utilisation, fuel efficiency and overall operating costs with far greater accuracy.

As a result, replacement decisions no longer need to rely solely on age or mileage thresholds, but can instead be based on real operational and financial data.

In Conclusion

The most successful fleets now view end-of-life vehicle planning as a strategic discipline rather than simply a vehicle disposal exercise. Decisions around replacement, retention and disposal have a direct impact on operational efficiency, financial performance and long-term fleet resilience.

A structured replacement strategy can improve budget forecasting, reduce unplanned downtime, maintain vehicle reliability and support sustainability objectives through the introduction of newer, cleaner and more efficient assets. It also enables fleet managers to make informed decisions based on whole-life costs rather than reacting to failures as they occur.

Ultimately, the point at which a vehicle leaves the fleet can be just as important as the point at which it enters it. Retaining vehicles beyond their economically viable lifespan may appear cost-effective in the short term, but can quietly erode profitability, compromise operational performance and increase business risk.

Effective end-of-life planning is therefore not simply about replacing vehicles. It is about protecting service delivery, controlling long-term costs and ensuring the fleet remains reliable, efficient and fit for purpose in an increasingly demanding operating environment.●

NOWauction
BUY AND SELL IN AN INSTANT

Driving **Smarter Vehicle Disposal:** Inside **NOWauction's Digital-First Remarketing** Strategy

Introduction

For fleet operators, efficient vehicle disposal that maximises returns is a critical process that supports wider organisational goals and operational efficiency. In the public sector and essential services sectors, this can be particularly challenging due to the diverse range of assets involved, from motorcycles to specialist HGVs, alongside depot capacity constraints, compliance considerations and logistical pressures.

As a result, working with a disposal specialist that combines market expertise, advanced technology and a strong understanding of operational requirements is becoming increasingly important.

Part of Motor Auction Group, NOWauction is a digital-first vehicle remarketing and disposal service that combines specialist asset knowledge with the efficiency and reach of an online auction platform. Graham Howes, who leads the business, sat down with Essential Fleet Manager Magazine to explain why NOWauction is becoming the preferred disposal partner for a growing number of UK fleet operators, dealer groups and leasing companies.

Interview

Q. Could you tell us about the background to NOWauction and the opportunity in the market that led to its launch?

NOWauction is a trading style of MAG. We operated as an online business under MAG until late last year, when we launched our new digital back-office system. This technology has enabled us to develop and deliver new services for customers and prospects, built around flexibility, speed to market and the ability to avoid moving vehicles where customers have sufficient space to retain them on-site while transactions are still fully managed by us, giving buyers the normal auction safeguards.

Q. What were the key challenges in traditional fleet disposal processes that NOWauction was designed to solve?

Moving vehicles naturally introduces several potential issues into the disposal process, including collection delays and increased costs. Our aim is to understand each customer's operational requirements and match the right service solution to their needs.

Our on-site options mean an inspector can visit the vehicles, complete the appraisal process and have the vehicles listed in our sales channels on the same day.

For vendors where this option may not be suitable, we also offer a fully managed service. Vehicles can be sent to any of our three sites, where they are professionally prepared and offered through our timed sales channels.

Q. What are the main advantages of a digital-first remarketing platform compared with more traditional disposal routes, and how straightforward is the process for sellers?

There are benefits for both buyers and sellers when using an online selling platform.

For sellers, as previously mentioned, we offer several flexible solutions to suit their operational needs, alongside access to an expanding buyer base, consistent vehicle representation and experienced remarketing professionals acting as account managers.

For buyers, the platform provides the ability to bid on vehicles at their convenience, without the need to travel to a physical location. They also benefit from consistent vehicle presentation and a sales platform that is logical, informative and easy to use.

Q. One of the major advantages of your model is that vehicles can often remain on the seller's site. How does NOWauction use technology and data to ensure accurate appraisals and achieve the right market value?

Our appraise-and-sell product is delivered by trained inspectors who visit customer locations and use our inspection system to appraise vehicles and capture the *"beauty shot"* sale images.

When vehicles are added to the system, only the town or location is displayed rather than the customer's details. Once sold, we operate a controlled release process with system-generated collection instructions and unique release codes to ensure security and transparency throughout the transaction.

Q. NOWauction offers a range of disposal solutions to suit different operational needs. Could you explain the options currently available and any new innovations you are developing?

Our current products and solutions include:

- Managed timed sales, where vehicles come to us in a more traditional physical auction model
- Appraise and sell, where we visit vehicles at the customer's location
- White-label private marketplaces, where we build customers their own branded remarketing platform using our technology to sell vehicles directly to their buyer network
- Pool fleet management, where we manage the reallocation of vehicles on behalf of customers
- Re-lease preparation and support, turning ex-lease vehicles into professionally prepared used vehicles for secondary leasing opportunities

We have also recently launched a new application that supports two separate functions.

The first is the ability to quickly and easily upload vehicle details and select individual vehicles or batches for auction through a system called Push2Auction. Once loaded, the data flows directly into our transport system for allocation, alongside all relevant messaging and tracking information. In the future, we are also looking at how this data can support a *"coming soon"* functionality.

The second element is a new product called Self-Serve, which allows vendors to upload, appraise, image, reserve and list vehicles directly into our sales channels. An audit process is built into the system to ensure the quality of appraisals and imagery meets our standards.

The key difference between Self-Serve and other listing products is that the transaction remains directly between us and the buyer; it is not simply an introducer arrangement.

Q. Do services such as decommissioning, repair and refurbishment still play an important role in maximising asset values, and how do you determine when those additional steps will deliver a worthwhile return?

Generally, yes. Certain items fitted to commercial vehicles can add value, so unless equipment is highly specific — for example, emergency service-related modifications — it is often beneficial for those items to remain with the vehicle. However, we always follow the vendor's instructions precisely regarding these elements.

With the adoption of NAMA grading across both cars and LCVs, there is now greater opportunity to discuss grade enhancement with vendors, depending on market conditions. This may involve recommending certain reconditioning work to improve the vehicle's grade and balancing the associated costs against the likely return. Ultimately, however, the final decision always remains with the inventory owner.

...cont'd on page 22

"Fleet operators increasingly want flexibility, speed to market and solutions that minimise operational disruption."

...cont'd from page 21

Q. How does your combination of digital technology, buyer intelligence and industry expertise help ensure the fast and effective disposal of complex or specialist assets?

We have a wide cross-section of regular buyers who benefit from single sign-on access across our group sales platforms, covering both physical MAG sales and digital NOWauction channels.

Our new back-office system records interactions with sale lots across the platforms, while ongoing buyer engagement allows us to understand exactly what customers are looking for. This means we can quickly create targeted buyer lists for specialist vehicles, further supported by the experience and industry contacts of our sales team.

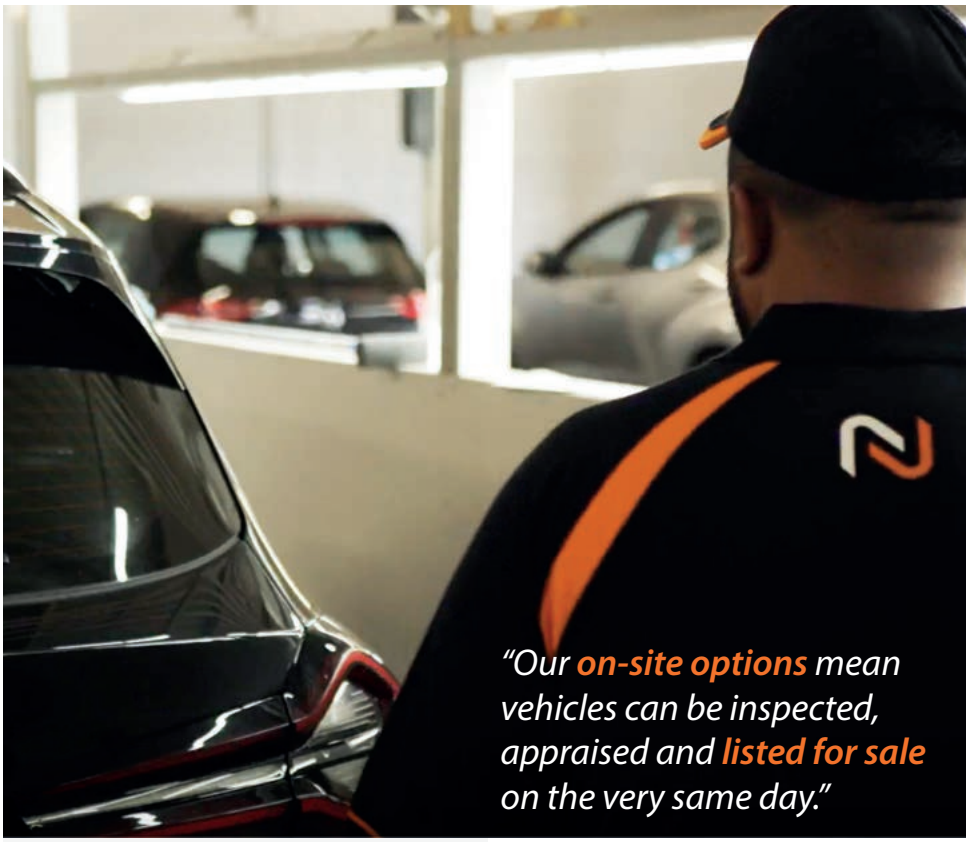
Q. Can you share an example of where NOWauction has helped a fleet operator achieve particularly strong results or overcome a complex disposal challenge?

Recently, a public sector organisation contacted us regarding multiple vehicles stored within a small operational yard that were no longer required.

We sent an inspector to the site, who completed all vehicle appraisals during the morning. The vehicles were listed that same afternoon and sold the following day for significantly above reserve values.

The customer avoided delays associated with vehicle collection and transportation, particularly important given the mix of heavy commercial vehicles and plant equipment, while also achieving a very healthy financial return.

Q. As remarketing becomes increasingly technology-led, how important is the experience and expertise of the team behind the platform in delivering the best results for customers?



Technology in remarketing is ultimately an enabler. Buyers still need confidence in the system, ease of use, the quality of vehicle information, condition appraisals and imagery before they are prepared to bid.

That confidence comes from strong relationships with the teams buyers interact with daily. This is where experience and consistency become critical.

Our sales team has more than 40 years of experience selling used vehicles online, supported by administration and inspection teams who fully understand what is required to sell vehicles the NOWauction way.

Q. Looking ahead, what do you see as the biggest changes shaping the future of vehicle remarketing, and how is NOWauction positioning itself to evolve with the market?

We believe offering vendors a flexible breadth of disposal routes will be key to future vehicle remarketing. That means providing options including physical auction sales, digital sales, retaining vehicles on-site, self-appraisal capabilities and inspector-led appraisals.

With the continued development of NOWauction and the launch of new products and services, which mark only the beginning of our journey, we believe the group is well positioned to meet these evolving market requirements.

Artificial intelligence will also become part of this product evolution as the right applications and opportunities emerge.●

Part of the TTC Group

Kier Group Delivers **Major Fleet Safety** and **Cost Benefits** Through **TTC Driver Risk Management** Partnership

A comprehensive driver risk management strategy led by Kier Group has helped the business cut road traffic collisions by 22%, delivering significant savings over two years. The improvements reflect a sustained focus on colleague safety, strengthened internal processes and governance, and the use of specialist tools and support from training and compliance provider TTC.

More than 10,000 drivers and a mixed fleet of almost 8,400 vehicles are benefiting from Kier's programme. Alongside targeted communications, policy, and day-to-day fleet management activity, improved insight and intervention have contributed to safer driving behaviours across the organisation.

"Our fleet and driver risk has naturally grown as our business has developed, particularly the risk of speeding and collision incidents," explains Gary Rigby, Group Head of Fleet Compliance for Kier Group. *"By working with TTC we've covered a wider range of driver management strategies, which has made a huge difference to risk awareness, but most importantly, we're delivering greater protection for our colleagues on the roads."*

Kier's Fleet Compliance team designed and delivered the programme, supported by TTC's risk management platform, Continuum. Using the platform, Kier rolled out annual risk assessments to around 8,000 employees over three months and achieved a 93% completion rate. Insights from these risk assessments and driver profiling helped Kier to target communications and provide e-learning aligned to driver requirements. In the first year alone, more than 110,000 e-learning modules were issued, reaching a 90% completion rate.

"Working together with TTC, our team analyses the data, agrees priorities and then puts practical interventions in place to help our drivers be safer and grow their awareness and understanding of road risk," commented Sean Smales, Fleet Compliance Manager at Kier Group. *"Continuum supports this by bringing information together in one place, helping us to manage our 10,000 drivers and the wider fleet efficiently. Combined with the work our managers do day to day, it gives us confidence our drivers are not only compliant, but also increasingly competent and safer in their vehicles."*

A key element of Kier's programme is its Permit to Drive process, which Kier introduced to make driving eligibility clear, consistent and auditable across the business. Supported by TTC's system capability, the process places responsibility for maintaining driving eligibility firmly with the drivers. Kier set mandatory requirements, such as verifying and keeping all documents up to date, and fleet managers can confirm compliance before a permit is granted, providing full visibility and an end-to-end record. Integration with the company expense process also ensures that mileage claims are only reimbursed if the driver holds a valid permit. Since launching Permit to Drive, Kier has seen a 70% reduction in non-compliance.

Kier's Fleet Compliance team and Transport Managers also developed a Driver Risk Matrix to define risk indicators such as disqualifications, penalty points and collisions, strengthening oversight and supporting a clearer understanding of driver behaviour. The approach is informed by operational experience and supported by data from TTC systems, helping to identify where targeted training and support may be required.

Katie Wright, Chief Revenue Officer of TTC Group, added: *"Kier has shown strong leadership in managing a significant and diverse fleet, recognising that driver safety goes far beyond basic compliance. Their commitment to setting clear standards, engaging drivers and supporting them with the right training and development, regardless of the vehicle they operate, has been central to the results achieved."*

By combining Kier's operational delivery and management oversight with data-led insight and targeted training interventions, the programme has helped strengthen driver capability, improve road safety outcomes and embed a culture of responsibility across the fleet."

"This partnership demonstrates what can be achieved when organisations work together with a shared commitment to safety and continuous improvement."●

For more information visit: **www.thettcgroup.com**

New **Food Waste Collection** Fleet **Rolls Out** Across **Somerset**

Somerset has begun the rollout of a new fleet of food waste collection vehicles, marking a significant step forward in the county's efforts to improve recycling and reduce environmental impact.

The vehicles are being introduced through a partnership between Somerset Council and waste and resource management company SUEZ, supporting the expansion of food waste collections to all households across the county. The move is part of a wider improvement programme designed to make recycling easier and more accessible for residents, including those living in flats and Houses of Multiple Occupation.

With the latest changes, every household in Somerset now has the ability to recycle food waste alongside other common materials such as plastics, metals, cartons, cardboard, paper and glass.

The new collection trucks feature distinctive, educational branding designed to highlight the importance of food waste recycling. The artwork on the vehicles illustrates the journey of discarded food—from kitchen caddies through to its transformation into renewable energy and agricultural fertiliser—helping to show the wider benefits of recycling in a clear and engaging way.

The design also includes a set of animated-style food waste characters, familiar to residents from recent awareness campaigns on platforms such as YouTube and ITVX. These visuals have been created to make recycling messages more approachable and memorable across all age groups.

Matthew Canning, Contract Director for Somerset at SUEZ, said the initiative represents an important step in supporting residents to take part in food waste recycling. He highlighted that making the service both visible and straightforward helps households understand their role in producing renewable energy and supporting a more sustainable future for the county.

Somerset Council's Executive Member for Transport and Waste Services, Cllr Richard Wilkins, described the expansion as a major milestone. He said extending food waste collections to every household will help reduce overall waste levels, lower emissions, and turn everyday food scraps into a valuable resource.

The campaign also includes simple messaging aimed at showing the environmental impact of small actions at home. For example, just one full kitchen caddy of food waste can generate enough energy to power a lightbulb for a full day—demonstrating how individual recycling habits can contribute to wider environmental benefits across Somerset.●.

West Berkshire Council Unveils **Refreshed Fleet Livery** to **Boost Visibility** in **Communities**

West Berkshire Council has introduced a new-look design for its council vehicles to improve visibility and recognition of its services across towns and villages throughout the district.

The updated livery features a more consistent, modern design and will be rolled out gradually across the council's fleet. As vehicles travel daily through local communities, the refreshed branding is also intended to highlight the wide range of services the council delivers.

First Vehicles Promote Fostering Campaign

The first two vehicles to feature the new design are being used to promote fostering services, coinciding with Foster Care Fortnight (11–24 May), a national campaign that celebrates the role of foster carers and the impact they have on children and young people.

The council says using the vehicles in this way will help raise awareness of fostering opportunities and encourage more local people to consider becoming foster carers.

Recruiting more foster carers remains a key priority for the authority. Increasing local placements allows children and young people to remain closer to their schools, support networks and communities, while also helping the council reduce reliance on higher-cost care arrangements.

Strengthening Identity During Local Change

The council also says the refreshed vehicle branding will help maintain a visible, consistent presence in communities at a time when local government structures may be subject to change.

By ensuring a clear, recognisable design across its fleet, the authority aims to reinforce its connection with residents and make its services easier to identify in everyday settings.

Wider Rollout Planned

Over time, more council vehicles will adopt the new livery. Future designs are expected to highlight different council services and priorities, helping residents better understand the work being carried out across the authority.

Councillor Stuart Gourley, Executive Member for Environment and Highways, joined the council to formally unveil the new-look fleet..●

Fleet Digitalisation: Why Connected Operations Matter More Than Ever

Fleet digitalisation is the shift from a manual, disconnected processes towards a more joined-up, data-led way of working.

For many fleets, the impetus to digitalise starts with a familiar problem. A fleet might introduce a safety camera system first. Later, a telematics product is added. Then, further tools are brought in to support areas such as reporting, compliance or operational oversight.

Over time, that creates a patchwork of disconnected systems, each with separate logins, separate workflows and separate data. Reporting is inconsistent. Nobody has the full picture.

Why a Unified Solution Matters

Unified fleet management platforms bring telematics, video, incident management, safety systems, compliance records and maintenance data into one environment. They can accept information from third-party tools such as weigh systems, fuel platforms or tachograph services, reducing duplication and creating a more complete operational view.

A unified platform, such as Fleetclear Connect, helps fleets:

- Reduce blind spots between systems
- Make better use of existing data
- Cut duplicated administrative work

Telematics as the Foundation

For many fleets, telematics is the first real step into fleet digitalisation.

That is because telematics turns the vehicle into a connected data source. Instead of only knowing where a vehicle is, operators can begin to understand how it is being used, how it is being driven, whether it is idling too much, whether it is being fully utilised and whether vehicle or driver patterns need attention.

Good telematics should help fleets establish if managers working from evidence or assumptions and answer questions such as:

- Which vehicles are underused?
- Where is time being lost?
- Are some drivers showing repeated behaviour trends?

How Digitalisation Improves Safety, Compliance and Risk Management

Fleet digitalisation is often discussed in terms of efficiency, but its value goes much further, strengthening how fleets manage safety, compliance and operational risk.

Connected systems help by bringing together telematics, camera footage, alerts and supporting records into a clearer operational picture. That makes it easier to identify issues earlier, review events properly and respond with better evidence.

This creates important benefits:

- **Better Safety Oversight**
  Connected systems give operators earlier visibility of developing risks. Instead of relying on delayed reviews or isolated reports, managers can monitor trends in speed, harsh braking, route exposure or equipment status and act sooner.
- **Stronger Compliance Support**
  Compliance is easier to manage when records and evidence are centralised. Inspection history, incident reports, training records and supporting footage can all be accessed more quickly, reducing the time spent searching across multiple systems.
- **More Proactive Risk Management**
  Perhaps the biggest shift is that connected systems support earlier intervention. Fleets can spot recurring issues such as speeding hotspots, repeated near misses or equipment faults before they become more serious problems.

That changes the role of management. Rather than reacting after the event, teams are in a better position to identify trends, reduce exposure and take a more proactive approach to risk.

Final Thought

Fleet digitalisation is not about making fleet management more complicated. It is about making it more connected, more visible and more manageable. Modern fleets are working in an environment of rising expectations, and digitalisation is what helps them respond with better visibility, stronger control and more reliable evidence.

Looking to move from fragmented systems to a more connected fleet operation?

Contact Fleetclear today to see how digital fleet technology can support safer, smarter and more efficient operations.●

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Security: Protecting **Vehicle Fleets** in an Increasingly **Targeted Environment**

Vehicle security has consistently been a key concern for fleet operators, affecting downtime, risk levels, and service reliability.

Today, threats vary from organised criminal groups intentionally targeting fleet vehicles to opportunistic thefts caused by visible tools or equipment left inside cabs. Additionally, the increase in advanced keyless vehicle attacks has added another vulnerability layer.

Fleet vehicles are not simply transport assets. They carry high-value tools, specialist equipment, and are increasingly integrated with connected systems and internal data platforms. As a result, the risk extends beyond physical loss to include sensitive operational data and broader cybersecurity exposure.

Many vehicles working to provide essential services effectively operate as mobile workstations. When one is stolen or broken into, the impact goes far beyond replacement cost. Service disruption, missed appointments, delayed response times, increased insurance premiums, and reputational damage can all follow, often with direct consequences for end users and service level commitments.

As a result, vehicle security should not be treated as a basic locking procedure or an administrative afterthought. It is a core component of fleet risk management, requiring a proactive, layered approach that integrates physical protection, digital safeguards, and operational discipline.

The Growing Threat Facing Fleet Operators

In many cases, vehicle theft is highly targeted. Criminals are increasingly using sophisticated techniques such as relay attacks, signal jamming, key cloning, and electronic bypass devices to defeat factory-fitted security systems.

A particularly concerning trend is the rise of "peel and steal" attacks, where criminals forcibly peel back van doors or panels to gain rapid access to tools and equipment. These incidents can occur in minutes, often leaving significant structural damage even when the vehicle itself is not stolen.

For fleets operating around the clock, exposure is further increased. Vehicles are frequently parked at employee homes, temporary worksites, or public locations, all of which present additional security risks. The challenge for fleet managers is balancing operational flexibility with robust, practical security measures that protect both assets and the workforce.

Technology Driving Smarter Vehicle Security

As theft methods evolve, so too must fleet security strategies. Increasingly, operators are adopting integrated security technologies within broader fleet management systems to improve visibility and control.

Solutions such as GPS tracking, telematics, remote immobilisation, and geofencing enable real-time monitoring of vehicle activity. These systems can trigger instant alerts if a vehicle is moved unexpectedly, operated outside authorised hours, or leaves predefined operational zones.

Geofencing is particularly valuable, allowing operators to establish virtual boundaries around depots, job sites, or restricted areas. Any unauthorised movement beyond these zones can automatically generate alerts, supporting faster intervention.

In more advanced systems, live tracking and remote immobilisation capabilities can assist in recovery efforts and significantly improve the likelihood of retrieving stolen vehicles.

Protecting Tools and Equipment

For many fleet operators, the greatest financial loss does not come from the vehicle itself, but from the tools and specialist equipment stored inside it.

In response, many organisations are investing in enhanced physical protection measures, including reinforced locks, slamlocks, deadlocks, internal shielding, lock protection plates, and secure in-vehicle storage systems designed specifically to resist forced entry and peel-and-steal attacks.

Forensic marking technologies are also gaining traction. These systems use invisible liquid solutions containing unique forensic identifiers or synthetic DNA markers that can be applied to tools and equipment. If stolen items are recovered, they can be traced back to their owner using UV detection and forensic analysis. Visible signage on vehicles further strengthens this approach by acting as a deterrent.

Connected security systems are also becoming more advanced, with smart alarms, motion sensors, remote alerts, and onboard camera solutions helping

operators detect and respond to incidents more quickly.

Some fleets are additionally adopting RFID tagging and digital inventory systems to improve visibility and accountability of tools across teams and sites.

Driver Awareness Remains Critical

Despite advances in technology, driver behaviour remains one of the most effective layers of defence against vehicle crime.

Simple but consistent practices, such as removing keys from vehicles, avoiding leaving tools on display, parking in well-lit or secure locations, and following clear security procedures, can significantly reduce exposure to risk.

Many organisations are now embedding vehicle security awareness into wider driver training programmes, ensuring staff understand both current threats and day-to-day best practices when operating in public or remote environments.

Ultimately, a strong security culture across the organisation is just as important as any technology investment.

Security and Compliance Go Hand in Hand

For essential service fleets, vehicle security is increasingly linked to compliance, duty of care, and operational resilience.

Protecting vehicles and equipment supports service continuity, reduces downtime, strengthens insurance compliance, and enhances overall fleet reliability.

At the same time, as vehicles become more connected, cybersecurity is emerging as a parallel concern. Fleet operators are now required to consider how telematics systems, vehicle data, and connected platforms are protected against unauthorised access or cyber threats.

This broader perspective means security must now be viewed across the entire vehicle ecosystem, not just the physical asset.

Branding as a Security Tool

Vehicle branding is often viewed purely as a marketing asset, but it can also play a meaningful role in security.

Clearly branded vehicles are easier for authorities to identify and more difficult for criminals to pass off or dispose of without detection. In many cases, high-visibility branding increases the perceived risk of being caught, making these vehicles less attractive targets for opportunistic theft.

"Today, vehicle security is no longer just about preventing theft — it is about protecting operational continuity, frontline services, valuable equipment, and increasingly, the data connected to every vehicle on the road."

Criminals tend to seek quick, low-risk opportunities. Distinctive liveries, fleet numbers, warning decals, and visible tracking or forensic marking indicators all add friction to that process. Even simple messaging such as "Tracked Vehicle" or "No Tools Left Overnight" can act as a deterrent.

Internally, branding can also reinforce driver accountability, as operators of highly visible vehicles are often more conscious of security practices and driving standards.

When used effectively, vehicle branding therefore becomes more than corporate identity; it can support security, strengthen public trust, and enhance operational professionalism.

Building a More Secure Fleet

There is no single solution to vehicle security. The most effective strategies combine technology, physical protection, operational procedures, and driver engagement into a single, layered approach.

By adopting a proactive security mindset, fleet operators can significantly reduce risk, improve visibility and control, and strengthen the resilience of essential service operations.●

"Security and compliance go hand in hand. Protecting vehicles, tools and data helps minimise downtime, supports duty-of-care responsibilities and ensures services continue to operate efficiently when communities depend on them most."

Tracker

Beyond Prevention: How **Tracker** is **Helping Fleets Fight Back** Against **Vehicle Theft**

Van theft continues to present a significant challenge for fleet operators across the UK. Beyond the immediate financial loss of a stolen vehicle, businesses face operational disruption, missed customer commitments, increased insurance costs and potential reputational damage. For organisations providing essential services, the consequences can be even more severe.

Utilities providers, telecommunications engineers, infrastructure maintenance contractors, housing organisations and emergency support services all depend on vehicles to deliver critical services every day. When a vehicle is stolen, it is not simply an asset that disappears; specialist equipment, tools, stock and operational capability can also be lost, affecting productivity, customer service and organisational resilience.

As criminal methods become increasingly sophisticated, fleet operators are looking beyond traditional security measures and considering solutions that can improve the chances of recovering stolen vehicles quickly and effectively. One organisation taking a different approach is Tracker Network (UK) Ltd, combining stolen vehicle recovery technology with close collaboration with UK police forces to help locate and recover vehicles that might otherwise disappear into organised criminal networks.

Essential Fleet Manager Magazine spoke with Clive Wain, Tracker Network (UK)'s Head of Police Liaison, and Jennifer Davis, the company's recently appointed Sales Director, who brings extensive experience working with corporate, public sector and essential service fleets. Together, they shared how specialist expertise, innovative technology and close police collaboration have combined to create a vehicle recovery solution that not only helps protect fleet assets but can also assist in identifying and disrupting wider criminal activity.

Vehicle Theft Has Become a Sophisticated Criminal Enterprise

Vehicle theft has evolved dramatically over recent decades. According to Clive, who spent more than 30 years tackling organised crime and leading major investigations across South and West Yorkshire Police, criminals have adapted as vehicle technology has advanced.

"Thirty or forty years ago, stealing a vehicle was largely a mechanical challenge. Criminals would force locks, break steering columns, hot-wire ignitions or use copied keys. As vehicle manufacturers improved physical security, offenders adapted."

Today's vehicles are highly connected and increasingly dependent on electronic systems, keyless entry technology and onboard computers. As a result, criminals have shifted their focus away from physical attacks and towards exploiting the technology that controls the vehicle.

"In many ways, vehicle theft has followed the same pattern as wider cybercrime, with offenders increasingly targeting software, communications and electronic systems rather than metal locks and keys."

Clive explains that organised crime groups are often behind these thefts, stealing and moving vehicles quickly to facilitate or fund wider criminal activity.

For fleet operators and leasing companies, this means vehicle theft is no longer simply an inconvenience but a sophisticated criminal enterprise that threatens valuable assets, operational continuity and service delivery.

"Today's vehicle theft is no longer a mechanical crime; organised criminals are increasingly targeting the technology that controls the vehicle."

The Real Cost of a Stolen Vehicle

Whilst the loss of a vehicle itself is significant, Jennifer believes many organisations underestimate the wider operational consequences.

"The immediate consequence is operational disruption. A stolen vehicle is unavailable to do the job it was intended for, whether in commercial operations or frontline public services."

The result can be missed appointments, project delays, reduced productivity and additional costs associated with hiring replacement vehicles or reallocating resources.

There is also a considerable administrative burden. Fleet teams must manage police reports, insurance claims, investigations and vehicle replacement, diverting valuable time and resources away from day-to-day operations.

"In many cases, the vehicle is only part of the loss, with tools, equipment, cargo and potentially sensitive data also at risk."

Longer term, repeated theft incidents can increase insurance costs, drive investment in additional security measures and influence wider fleet management decisions.

For organisations delivering essential services, Jennifer believes vehicle theft should be viewed as far more than an asset protection issue.

"Vehicle theft should be viewed not simply as an asset loss issue, but as a business continuity and operational resilience challenge with significant financial, reputational and service delivery consequences."

Why Recovery Must Form Part of Every Security Strategy

When evaluating fleet security, Jennifer believes one of the most common mistakes organisations make is focusing solely on prevention.

"Whilst physical security measures such as locks, alarms and immobilisers remain important, organised criminals are increasingly using sophisticated electronic methods to steal vehicles. Even the best preventative measures can be defeated."

She argues that organisations should place equal emphasis on how quickly a stolen vehicle can be recovered if it is successfully stolen.

Tracker offers a range of solutions, including GPS, immobilisation technology and its unique GPS/VHF stolen vehicle recovery systems.

"What makes Tracker different is its VHF capability, which is designed to work even when criminals attempt to use signal-jamming devices that can affect most conventional GPS-based systems."

The technology is designed to help locate vehicles concealed in locations such as lock-ups, underground car parks and shipping containers, environments where traditional tracking technologies can face challenges.

Jennifer is also keen to distinguish stolen vehicle recovery systems from telematics solutions.

"Tracker's solutions are designed to protect and recover the asset, not monitor the individual. Tracker-protected assets are only monitored once the device has been activated following a reported theft, at which point Tracker works directly with the police to locate and recover the asset as quickly as possible.

"Recovery is no longer a nice-to-have; it is a critical component of fleet resilience."

The Power of Police Partnership

One of Tracker's key differentiators is its long-standing collaboration with UK police forces.

According to Clive, the partnership creates an operational capability that extends far beyond traditional tracking solutions.

"Tracker is the only stolen vehicle recovery provider formally supported by all 43 police forces in England and Wales, Police Scotland and, to an extent, the Police Service of Northern Ireland."

Tracker's technology is fitted within police patrol vehicles and helicopters, helping officers locate stolen vehicles more effectively.

"The effectiveness of the partnership is reflected in our recovery performance. We maintain a 95% recovery rate, with half of the stolen vehicles we recover found within four hours and 80% recovered within 24 hours."

The benefits often extend beyond the recovery of a single vehicle.

"Successful recoveries frequently lead police to chop shops where organised crime groups store stolen vehicles, dismantle them for parts or prepare them for export. This can provide valuable intelligence, uncover wider criminal activity and support further arrests and investigations."

For fleet operators, this means successful recoveries can contribute to the wider disruption of organised vehicle crime networks.

"Every stolen vehicle recovered has the potential to expose a much wider organised criminal network."

How Tracker Recovery Technology Works

Tracker's stolen vehicle recovery technology is designed to remain hidden from criminals and difficult to detect.

"In practice, a covert Tracker Stolen Vehicle Recovery device is installed within the vehicle, hidden in one of numerous potential locations," explains Clive.

Because there is no visible aerial or obvious indication that the vehicle is protected, thieves are less likely to identify or remove the device.

If the vehicle is reported stolen, the Tracker device is activated and begins transmitting a unique VHF signal.

"Unlike conventional tracking systems, this signal can penetrate environments that often defeat other technologies, including concrete structures, underground locations and metal shipping containers where stolen vehicles are frequently hidden."

Tracker's capabilities are further enhanced through Mesh Network technology. If a stolen vehicle is close to other vehicles fitted with compatible Tracker devices, those vehicles can help relay location information and support the recovery effort.

Tracker then works directly with police forces across the UK, guiding officers to the vehicle's precise location.

"This means valuable assets can often be recovered before they are dismantled, exported or disappear into criminal networks, reducing both financial losses and operational disruption."

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The Financial Benefits of Faster Recovery

Vehicle theft creates financial pressures that extend well beyond the value of the vehicle itself.

"Protecting vehicle assets throughout their operational lifecycle is critical, and approved stolen vehicle recovery technology can often form part of a wider risk-management strategy that may support more favourable insurance terms," says Jennifer.

However, insurance is only one part of the equation.

Vehicle downtime, replacement hire costs, insurance administration, lost productivity and disruption to service delivery can all create significant costs for organisations.

To illustrate the scale of the challenge, Jennifer points to DVLA figures showing that approximately 12,200 commercial vehicles were stolen during the previous year, 67% of which were panel vans.

"It is estimated that for every day these commercial vehicles remain unrecovered, businesses lose around £7.3 million in productivity."

By returning stolen vehicles to service more quickly, recovery technology can help reduce these wider operational and financial impacts.

Common Fleet Security Mistakes

When assessing fleet security requirements, Jennifer believes organisations must first understand exactly what is at risk.

"One of the biggest challenges is recognising that not every fleet has the same risk profile."

She advises organisations to consider not only the vehicle itself but also the tools, equipment, cargo, sensitive information and operational capability associated with that asset.

A common oversight is assuming that prevention measures alone provide sufficient protection.

"Another mistake is assuming GPS-only tracking solutions provide complete protection. Criminals are increasingly using signal-jamming technology to defeat conventional tracking systems."

Fleet operators should therefore consider whether their chosen solution can continue to operate in environments where stolen vehicles are commonly concealed, including underground car parks, lock-ups and shipping containers.

For public sector organisations in particular, vehicle theft can have a direct impact on service delivery.

"The theft of a single vehicle can affect the delivery of essential public services, so security planning should be viewed as a business continuity issue rather than purely an asset protection exercise."

Record Recoveries and Wider Crime Prevention

During 2025, Tracker and UK police recovered a record £41.3 million worth of stolen vehicles.

However, Clive believes the wider impact is equally important.

"The operation also led to the recovery of a further 200 stolen vehicles that were not fitted with Tracker devices, demonstrating the wider intelligence and enforcement benefits that successful recoveries can generate."

Tracker-assisted recoveries also helped police uncover and shut down 78 chop shops, leading to numerous arrests and ongoing investigations.

These outcomes demonstrate how the recovery of a single stolen vehicle can often contribute to much broader law enforcement activity and the disruption of organised criminal networks.

Staying Ahead of Emerging Threats

Vehicle crime continues to evolve, and both Clive and Jennifer believe the response must evolve alongside it.

"Our layered approach, which combines technology with police collaboration, is designed to address the increasingly sophisticated tactics used by organised criminal groups," says Jennifer.

She believes intelligence sharing between insurers, manufacturers, leasing companies, fleet operators and law enforcement agencies will become increasingly important as vehicle theft methods continue to develop.

"Tracker's long-standing police partnership provides valuable intelligence that helps identify emerging criminal trends and supports proactive enforcement activity."

Ultimately, fleet operators need confidence that their chosen security partner is preparing for future threats as well as responding to today's challenges.

"The biggest benefit is confidence. Vehicles are productive assets and theft creates significant operational and financial disruption. By combining VHF technology with a unique police partnership, Tracker helps organisations reduce downtime, protect asset value, support business continuity and focus on delivering services rather than managing the consequences of theft."●

For more information visit **www.tracker.co.uk** or to carry on the conversation email **Jennifer.Davis@tracker.co.uk**

Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Secures £4. 4.4m Investment for New Fire Engines and Equipment

Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue is set to invest an additional £ 4. 4 million to upgrade its frontline fleet, equipment and operational capabilities as part of a wider modernisation programme.

A major part of the investment will fund the introduction of nine new fire engines over the next two years, with longer- term plans to secure a further nine appliances by 2030.

New Appliances to Replace Ageing Fleet

The new fire engines will gradually replace older vehicles currently operating across the county, improving reliability, resilience and operational efficiency for frontline crews.

Fire appliances remain central to the service' s emergency response, attending incidents ranging from house fires and road traffic collisions to flooding and water rescues.

The new vehicles are being designed with flexibility and future operational demands in mind. They will incorporate the latest firefighting technology while allowing the service to adapt to emerging risks and future innovations.

Chief Fire Officer Mark Baxter said the investment is intended not only to modernise the fleet but also to improve firefighter safety and reduce unnecessary exposure to contaminants during incidents.

He said the new appliances are being developed to evolve alongside the risks faced by communities, helping crews operate more safely and effectively for years to come.

Long- Term Savings and Improved Reliability

Councillor Alex McGonigle, executive councillor for Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue, said the investment comes at an important time as the service faces rising maintenance and repair costs associated with ageing vehicles.

He said replacing older appliances will help reduce long- term operational costs while ensuring crews can continue to deliver a fast and effective emergency response across Lincolnshire.

Battery- Powered Rescue Equipment Under Review

Alongside the new fleet investment, the service is exploring the use of battery-powered rescue equipment to replace older hydraulic tools traditionally reliant on fuel- powered systems.

The newer equipment could help reduce reliance on conventional fuels, where costs have become increasingly unpredictable, while also offering operational improvements for firefighters.

Updated battery- powered cutting and spreading tools are expected to provide enhanced ergonomics and easier handling, helping crews work more efficiently during serious incidents and complex rescues.●

New Fire Engines to Enhance Emergency Response Across Cleveland

A new generation of advanced fire engines is being introduced across Teesside, strengthening frontline emergency response with the latest vehicle technology and design improvements.

The new appliances have been developed with direct input from firefighters to ensure they meet operational needs across a wide range of incidents, from urban emergencies to complex rural rescues.

The modern fire engines feature enhanced performance, improved crew safety systems, and upgraded equipment layouts to support faster, more efficient response times. Their design also prioritises reliability, durability, and adaptability in challenging conditions.

Fire services say the introduction of the new vehicles represents a significant investment in frontline emergency response, ensuring crews have access to equipment that reflects the demands of modern firefighting.

The new fleet has been designed to support a wide range of operational scenarios, including road traffic collisions, structural fires, and specialist rescue situations. Improvements to onboard systems are also expected to enhance firefighter safety and reduce physical strain during emergency call-outs.

A spokesperson involved in the programme said the development process has prioritised close collaboration with operational crews, ensuring the final design reflects real-world experience and frontline feedback.

They added that the investment will help ensure firefighters across the region are equipped with modern, reliable vehicles that improve both efficiency and safety when responding to emergencies.

The rollout of the new fire engines forms part of ongoing efforts to modernise emergency service fleets across the UK, supporting long-term investment in resilience, sustainability, and public safety.●

Vehicle Specification: Where **Procurement Decisions** Often **Fail**

Vehicle procurement should not be viewed purely as a commercial exercise centred on lease rates, purchase price, lead times, or manufacturer incentives. While these factors matter, they rarely determine how well a vehicle performs in day-to-day operation.

In practice, performance is defined much earlier, at the specification stage. This is where many procurement strategies drift from operational reality. A vehicle can be competitively priced, delivered on time, and meet headline requirements, yet still underperform if it has not been designed for how it will actually be used.

For fleet operators, this gap between procurement intent and real-world application is where inefficiencies, hidden costs, and operational frustrations begin to emerge.

When "Standard Spec" Isn't Fit for Purpose

For maintenance teams, engineers, and field operatives, vehicles serve as mobile workspaces, carrying tools, equipment, and materials that can quickly change their weight, layout, and purpose.

A standard van that seems suitable at the ordering stage can become unsuitable once racking, tools, and operational loads are added. Without careful planning, vehicles can quickly operate at or beyond their practical limits, increasing wear, reducing efficiency, and potentially creating compliance risks.

Beyond payload, poor internal layout, limited load space, or a lack of an integrated power supply can all restrict productivity. In these situations, crews are

forced to adapt their working methods to the vehicle, rather than the vehicle supporting the job it is there to do.

The financial impact is rarely immediate. Instead, it builds over time through higher fuel consumption, increased maintenance, reduced component life, and more frequent downtime. Individually, these may appear minor, but across a fleet they compound into a significantly higher whole-life cost. In many cases, the lowest-cost vehicle to procure becomes the most expensive to operate.

The Disconnect Between Procurement and Operations

A common challenge in fleet specification is the separation between those who procure vehicles and those who use them.

Procurement teams are typically focused on cost control, contracts, and supplier management, while operational teams prioritise practicality, reliability, and usability. When these perspectives are not aligned, specification gaps inevitably appear.

The result is vehicles that meet contractual requirements but fail in daily use. Engineers may lack adequate storage, service teams lose time due to inefficient layouts, and drivers are left compensating for design limitations in the field.

This disconnect reduces productivity, increases inefficiency, and can introduce avoidable operational risk.

Conversions, Layout, and the Value of Specialist Input

In practice, many specification issues stem from how vehicles are configured rather than from which vehicle is selected.

Racking systems, internal layouts, and equipment placement directly affect productivity. Poor design slows access to tools, increases job times, and creates inefficiencies that accumulate across the entire fleet.

Payload is another critical factor often underestimated at the procurement stage. Tools, racking, parts, and safety equipment quickly add weight before the operational load is even considered. Without careful planning, vehicles can operate close to maximum capacity on a daily basis, increasing wear on tyres, suspension, and braking systems, while also affecting fuel efficiency and stability.

With electric vehicles, these challenges are more pronounced, as battery weight reduces available payload and makes specification accuracy even more important.

This is where specialist conversion partners add real value. Using CAD design tools and increasingly sophisticated virtual modelling, they allow operators to visualise layouts before build, test configurations, and refine storage solutions early in the process.

More importantly, experienced converters bring sector knowledge that helps avoid common design mistakes. Small changes, such as adjusting racking positions, improving weight distribution, or redesigning tool access, can deliver measurable gains in efficiency, safety, and usability.

When internal layout design and specialist expertise are properly aligned with operational needs, the result is a vehicle that actively supports the work being carried out, rather than limiting it.

Future-Proofing Specification Decisions

Another weakness in procurement is a lack of flexibility to accommodate future change.

Fleet requirements rarely remain static. Changes in operational demand, equipment types, regulations, and technology can quickly render a fixed specification less effective over time.

Forward-thinking operators are addressing this by building flexibility into specification choices. Modular racking, adaptable storage systems, and scalable electrical installations allow vehicles to evolve with operational needs rather than become obsolete prematurely.

This reduces the risk of early replacement driven by specification limitations rather than by mechanical failure.

Conclusion: Specification Defines Performance

Procurement may start the fleet lifecycle, but specification defines its outcome.

A well-priced vehicle that is poorly specified will always underperform in real-world operation. A well-specified vehicle, even at a higher initial cost, will typically deliver lower whole-life costs, improved reliability, and greater operational efficiency.

For fleet operators, the key shift is recognising that procurement is not just about acquiring vehicles; it is about designing them for how they will actually be used.

In many cases, the difference between an efficient fleet and an inefficient one is not the vehicle chosen, but how well it was specified from the outset.●

SUPPLIER INSIGHT: MODUL-SYSTEMS

From **Design** to **Deployment**: Engineering **Excellence** in Vehicle **Conversion**

INTRODUCTION

When Kevin Walker joined Modul-System UK in January 2026 as Managing Director, he brought deep technical understanding and commercial expertise to a business already established as meeting the complex and demanding needs of fleet operators in commerce, industry and essential services. As fleet requirements continue to evolve through electrification, digital integration and operational pressures, Kevin is focused on driving innovation that not only meets today's challenges but anticipates tomorrow's needs.

Essential Fleet Manager was delighted to speak with Kevin, who shares his insights into the future of fleet technology, the importance of customer-led engineering and how Modul-System UK is helping organisations maximise vehicle performance, safety and efficiency with a unique blend of technical expertise and comprehensive commitment to customer service.

INTERVIEW

When you joined Modul-System UK as Managing Director in January 2026, what were your immediate priorities and where did you see the greatest opportunities for growth and development?

When I joined Modul-System UK, my first priority was to understand the business from the ground up: our people, processes, customers and the value we deliver every day. Modul-System already had a strong reputation, but I saw an opportunity to sharpen our proposition and position the business not simply as a supplier of vehicle racking or conversions, but as a strategic partner to fleet operators.

The greatest opportunity is what I call Conversion Performance Engineering. Fleet operators are under pressure to reduce downtime, transition to electric vehicles, protect payload, improve safety, manage compliance and deliver better whole-life value. Vehicle conversion can no longer be treated as an afterthought; it must be engineered around the operational outcome the customer needs.

My early focus was therefore on aligning the whole business around customer outcomes: uptime, safety, payload efficiency, compliance, driver usability and EV readiness. Growth is not only about converting more vehicles; it is about creating greater value by helping customers operate smarter, safer and more efficiently.

Q: Modul-System already has a strong reputation within the fleet sector. What strengths and capabilities were you particularly keen to build upon, and what were the first changes or initiatives you introduced?

The key strength I wanted to build upon was the combination of class-leading product engineering and deep fleet-sector experience. Modul-System has almost fifty years of experience designing and crash-testing vehicle storage systems, supported by a strong international engineering base and a nationwide service network.

Our product platform gives us a genuine advantage: lightweight racking, drill-free installation, electrical integration and digitally connected systems. These capabilities are increasingly important as fleets move towards electric vehicles, where every kilogram, every watt of energy and every operational detail matters.

That heritage has also received independent recognition through the What Van? Awards. Awards matter not simply as trophies, but because they validate the engineering, safety and service delivered by the whole team and encourage us to keep raising the standard.

One of my first initiatives was to change

The Modul-System team proudly celebrates winning the Technology Award at the WhatVan? Awards 2026

the way we describe what we do. A conversion is not simply a fit-out or a collection of accessories; it directly affects payload, range, safety, compliance, residual value, productivity and customer service delivery. We have therefore placed greater emphasis on early stakeholder engagement, vehicle familiarisation and in-service support.

That support continues after the vehicle enters operation. Through our nationwide network of around 1,200 engineers, customers can access 24/7 assistance, with a commitment to resolving the vast majority of issues within two hours.

Q: The shift from diesel to electric is creating new challenges for fleet operators, from payload and weight distribution to range and energy management. How is Modul-System adapting its vehicle conversion engineering to address these issues and help customers maximise both vehicle performance and operational efficiency?

Electrification creates new challenges for fleet operators, but it also plays directly to one of Modul-System's long-standing strengths. Innovation around electric vehicles, lightweight design and intelligent conversion has been central to our approach for many years. We have always recognised that the conversion has a direct impact on vehicle performance, and that becomes even more important with an eLCV.

One of our key differentiators is our lightweight, drill-free installation approach. Avoiding unnecessary drilling helps protect the vehicle structure, reduce corrosion risk, support warranty protection and preserve residual value. This is especially important for electric vehicles, where the base asset cost is often higher and whole-life value must be protected.

Weight is equally critical. Every kilogram added can affect payload, range, energy consumption and efficiency. Our ultra-high-strength steel racking is up to 40% lighter than conventional systems without compromising durability or safety, while our honeycomb Smart Floor is around 30% lighter than traditional flooring. On a typical L2 van, that can save approximately 18kg. The Smart Floor Bracket then bonds directly to the vehicle body, creating a secure, crash-tested mounting platform without drilling into the floor.

We also treat the vehicle as a complete energy ecosystem. Electrical systems, heating, lighting, telematics and onboard equipment must work together. Modul-Connect telematics and our e-Power 2000 auxiliary battery allow equipment such as heaters, lighting and inverters to run intelligently from a dedicated supply, helping protect the traction battery and vehicle range.

Our role is to help customers make informed decisions, even when that means challenging the original specification. The objective is not to transfer a diesel layout into an electric van; it is to engineer a practical, safe, compliant and productive vehicle that preserves the benefits of electrification.

Q: Many of the lessons learned from Electric Light Vehicle (eLCV) conversions can also benefit conventional fleets. How are innovations developed for eLCVs helping to improve the efficiency and productivity of diesel-powered vehicles?

The exciting aspect of electric vehicles is that they challenge the industry to think differently. EVs force a much sharper focus on weight, energy use, aerodynamics, auxiliary power, usability and how a vehicle operates day to day. That discipline benefits every type of vehicle.

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Kia PV5 fully equipped with Modul-System racking, designed for efficiency and productivity.

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For us, the principle is simple: energy is energy. Anything we save through reduced weight, smarter design, better power management or more efficient use can also benefit diesel, hybrid, hydrogen and future propulsion systems.

Lightweight racking is a good example. In an EV, it helps protect range and payload. In a diesel van, it can improve fuel efficiency, increase usable payload and reduce lifetime CO2 emissions and operating costs. Better storage design also saves time, improves driver productivity and supports safer working practices, regardless of the powertrain.

Our drill-free approach delivers the same transferable benefit by protecting the vehicle structure, reducing corrosion risk and supporting residual value. Likewise, Modul-Connect provides useful operational data and connected functionality whether the vehicle has a battery or a fuel tank.

EV is therefore more than a powertrain change; it is a catalyst for better conversion engineering. It pushes us to design smarter, lighter and more operationally focused vehicles, and every fleet can benefit from that.

Q: Fleet procurement often involves multiple stakeholders with differing priorities. How does engaging with everyone from drivers and engineers to procurement and health and safety teams help ensure the final vehicle specification delivers in the real world?

The best vehicle specifications are created when all relevant stakeholders are involved early. Procurement focuses on value, standardisation and supplier performance; fleet managers consider uptime, operational suitability and whole-life cost; health and safety teams focus on risk and compliance; and drivers and engineers understand how the vehicle will actually be used every day.

If a conversion is designed around only one of those perspectives, it may look good on paper but fail in real-world operation. Drivers and engineers can identify what must be accessible, what slows the job down and where risks may arise. Health and safety teams can challenge manual-handling, loading and access arrangements, while procurement ensures the solution is commercially sustainable and scalable.

Customers experience the benefits of a fully fitted vehicle solution

Our role is to bring those priorities together and translate them into one practical, safe and commercially robust specification. We are not simply taking an order; we are helping the customer define the right solution.

When stakeholders are engaged from the outset, the result is stronger adoption, fewer in-service issues, safer vehicles and a better return on investment.

Q: In a market where fleet operators are making major investments in vehicles and technology, trust is earned through consistent delivery, quality and safety. How does Modul-System work with its partners and suppliers to uphold the highest safety standards, build lasting customer confidence and ensure the reliability and consistency that fleets depend upon?

Trust is extremely important to me personally and to Modul-System as an organisation. I talk about trust with our teams and customers all the time because every successful relationship depends on it. That is true within families, between loved ones, among colleagues and throughout relationships with suppliers and customers. Once trust is lost, any relationship becomes difficult.

At Modul-System, trust is not only part of our mentality; it is part of our mission.

Customers are making significant investments in their vehicles, people and operations. They need to trust that their conversion partner will do what it promises, deliver consistently and stand behind the solution once it is in service.

We earn that trust through robust engineering, proven products, controlled installation processes and supply partners who share our standards. Our commitment to safety was demonstrated recently when a van fitted with our crash-tested racking was involved in a serious head-on impact. Thankfully nobody was hurt, and despite major damage to the front of the vehicle, the storage system remained firmly in place with the equipment retained on the shelves. That is why we crash-test our systems and refuse to compromise on safety.

Fleet operators also need consistency at scale. A vehicle converted in one part of the country should meet the same standard as one converted hundreds of miles away. We support that through documented processes, quality control, standardisation and structured training for our installers, backed by 24/7 support and our two-hour response commitment.

Trust also means being honest. If a specification creates unnecessary weight, reduces usability or compromises safety or whole-life value, we have a

responsibility to challenge it. Lasting confidence comes from doing the basics brilliantly, communicating clearly and taking responsibility for the outcome.

Q: With increasing capabilities and technology, vehicles are now complex pieces of equipment. Can you explain Modul-System's unique approach to vehicle familiarisation and how the process, which involves drivers, fleet managers and other stakeholders, helps to maximise the value of the investment?

Most minor issues arise during the first few weeks of operation, when drivers are getting used to a new vehicle and its equipment. A conversion can look perfect in a technical specification, but if the people using it every day do not understand it, trust it or feel it supports the job, the investment will never deliver its full value.

That is why familiarisation is a core part of our approach. A modern converted van is no longer simply shelving in the back; it can include integrated electrics, auxiliary power, Modul-Connect telematics, load management and energy systems. Handing over that level of capability with only the keys and a manual means the operator may use only a fraction of what it has purchased.

Our familiarisation process brings the right people together before the vehicles go fully live. We walk through the design, explain the equipment, discuss safe and correct use and ensure the vehicle is understood in a genuine operational context.

We recently held a successful familiarisation day with Scotia Gas Networks, involving drivers and other key stakeholders in reviewing the vehicle and discussing how it would work day to day. The approach was also endorsed by union representatives, providing further confidence that the solution had been properly considered from operational, workforce and safety perspectives.

This is genuine stakeholder engagement rather than a box-ticking exercise. It builds confidence, supports adoption, reduces avoidable in-service issues and helps ensure the customer receives the full operational value of the investment. Ultimately, we are not simply handing over converted vehicles; we are helping customers deploy working assets safely, confidently and effectively.

Q: As fleets continue to embrace electrification and more sophisticated vehicle conversions, what impact do you think this will have on future DVSA scrutiny, and what steps should operators be taking now to ensure ongoing compliance and safety?

My view is that scrutiny will increase. Converted vans are no longer simple vehicles with a few accessories added; they are sophisticated working assets carrying electrical systems, auxiliary power, connected technology, specialist equipment and tightly managed payloads.

DVSA will continue to focus on roadworthiness, load security, weight compliance and operator responsibility, but electrification raises the stakes. A poor payload calculation can affect compliance, range and operational efficiency, while poor electrical integration can create safety, reliability and warranty risks.

Operators must also remember that a van is often a mobile place of work. Under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, employers must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of employees at work. In a converted van, the racking, storage, load restraint, electrical systems and access arrangements all form part of that working environment.

My advice is simple: treat conversion as part of the vehicle's compliance and safety profile from day one, and manage it throughout the vehicle's working life. Use partners who can demonstrate engineering rigour, crash-test their systems and document their work. Understand payload and axle weights, control any later modifications and make sure drivers are properly familiarised with the vehicle and equipment.

Compliance is not a burden when it is built in properly. It protects the driver, the public, the vehicle and the operator, while supporting uptime, asset life, whole-life cost and residual value.

Q: Many companies describe themselves as customer-focused. What does being genuinely customer-centric mean to you, and how is that philosophy reflected in Modul-System's day-to-day operations?

Being genuinely customer-centric means understanding the customer's world, not simply selling into it. It means knowing the pressures they face, how their vehicles are used, what success looks like and what happens operationally when a vehicle does not perform.

For us, customer-centricity starts with listening. Before proposing a solution, we want to understand the driver's daily tasks, the equipment being carried, the safety risks, uptime requirements, electrification plans, compliance concerns and the support the customer will need after delivery.

...cont'd on page **38**

Enhanced vehicle lighting ensures safe and efficient working conditions

...cont'd from page **37**

It also means being prepared to challenge. Sometimes the best customer service is explaining why part of a proposed specification may add unnecessary weight, create complexity or compromise usability and whole-life value.

That philosophy runs through how we consult, design, build, familiarise and support vehicles in service. We want to move beyond a transactional supplier relationship and become a partner that helps customers operate better. The strongest customer relationships are built when you care about the outcome, not just the order.

Q: Looking ahead, what are your ambitions for Modul-System UK over the next three to five years, and how do you want the business to be recognised within the fleet and vehicle conversion sectors?

Our ambition is clear: to be the UK market's leading and most trusted partner for safe, innovative and sustainable modular vehicle systems.

That vision captures how we want Modul-System UK to be recognised. We do not simply want to be seen as a racking or conversion supplier; we want to be the partner that helps fleet operators make better decisions, protect their assets, support their drivers and improve vehicle performance throughout the working life of the fleet.

Over the next three to five years, we will combine our proven product platform with deeper customer partnership, engineering expertise and operational support. Safety will remain the foundation of every conversion. Innovation will help us continually improve how vehicles are designed, integrated and used. Sustainability will mean more than electrification; it will include reducing weight, improving efficiency, protecting residual value, extending asset life and cutting waste.

A key priority is using real operational data rather than assumptions. Our new Efficiency Audit Module, which begins live trials with Scotia Gas Networks, uses a discreet AI camera inside a working van to create a heatmap of the load space. It shows which tools are regularly used, which are rarely touched and how technicians move around the vehicle.

Congratulations to Michael Rogers on reaching an impressive 25 years' dedicated service and commitment to the business

We can then design around evidence, creating safer, faster and more efficient working environments.

Circular conversion is another important focus. We already consider de-fleet and re-fleet, and we want to expand this into recovering, refurbishing, re-certifying and redeploying racking when vehicles leave service. Our ambition is to redeploy well over a thousand refurbished systems, helping customers remove significant cost and carbon from their fleets.

We also want to make specification faster and smarter, using technology to turn operational requirements into optimised layouts, payload calculations and cost comparisons far more quickly. Together, these initiatives will help establish Modul-System as a trusted, data-led fleet performance partner that sets the standard for modern vehicle conversion.

Q: Finally, what do you see as the biggest opportunities and challenges facing fleet operators in the years ahead, and how can suppliers best support them through this period of change?

The biggest challenge facing fleet operators is complexity. They are managing electrification, cost pressure, vehicle availability, compliance, driver safety, sustainability targets and new technology, while still needing to keep their operations moving every day.

Within that complexity lies a significant opportunity. Fleets that make informed decisions now can create safer, more efficient and more resilient operations, with vehicles that become smarter, better-connected and better-designed mobile workplaces.

Suppliers must support that transition by moving beyond simply selling products. We need to provide expertise, constructive challenge, guidance and aftercare, and be honest about trade-offs early enough to influence the outcome. Data and sustainability will be particularly important, giving operators clear evidence of performance, waste and the value delivered by each conversion.

For conversion suppliers, the opportunity is to unlock fleet performance by reducing weight, improving storage design, integrating technology intelligently, supporting EV adoption, strengthening compliance and reducing downtime. That is where Modul-System intends to add value.●

For more information visit: **www.modul-system.co.uk**

NEAS Showcases **New Electric Ambulance**s at Staff and Partner Events

North East Ambulance Service (NEAS) has given staff, NHS partners and emergency service colleagues an early look at a new generation of electric emergency and patient transport vehicles set to enter service in the coming months.

Two showcase events, held at the Trust's Driver Training Centre in Team Valley and its headquarters in Newcastle, brought together a wide range of stakeholders including NEAS Board members and governors, NHS England representatives, ambulance services from across the UK, vehicle manufacturers, emergency service partners and teams from both NEAS and NEAS Unified Solutions (NEASUS).

Attendees had the opportunity to explore the vehicles, learn about the technology behind them and discuss how they will be integrated into frontline and non-emergency operations.

New Electric Fleet Arriving

The vehicles on display included:

- Škoda Enyaq Rapid Response Vehicle (RRV)
- Renault E-Master ambulance
- Renault E-Master Patient Transport Service (PTS) vehicle
- Ford E-Transit ambulance

The new vehicles form part of NEAS's contribution to the NHS's net zero ambitions, supporting efforts to reduce fleet emissions while maintaining high standards of patient care and operational performance.

Supporting Staff and Patient Care

NEAS Chief Executive Kevin Scollay said the move towards electric vehicles could deliver benefits beyond carbon reduction, including improvements to staff wellbeing and operational efficiency.

Features such as self-loading stretchers have the potential to reduce musculoskeletal injuries among frontline crews, helping lower sickness absence and improve staff welfare. Scollay also highlighted the potential for enhanced vehicle reliability and faster turnaround times to support ambulance response performance.

He said the Trust is working closely with vehicle manufacturers, conversion specialists and infrastructure providers to ensure the transition is informed by operational experience and supported by appropriate charging facilities.

While acknowledging ongoing challenges around charging infrastructure and operational resilience, Scollay emphasised the importance of engaging staff and partners early in the process to help shape a practical and sustainable transition.

He described the move towards electrification as both a challenge and an opportunity, requiring close collaboration across the NHS and emergency services sector to modernise fleets while improving outcomes for patients and staff.

Helping Shape the NHS's Zero-Emission Future

Paul Leach, Head of Ambulance Fleet at NHS England, attended the events and highlighted the role NEAS is playing in supporting the wider NHS decarbonisation strategy.

He said the programme demonstrates how innovation at a local level can help inform the national approach to zero-emission ambulance operations. Alongside environmental benefits, he noted that quieter, smoother-running vehicles could also improve working conditions for ambulance crews and patient comfort during journeys.

While further work is required to expand charging infrastructure and support widespread deployment, Leach said the progress being made by NEAS represents an important step towards the NHS's long-term ambition of operating a fully zero-emission ambulance fleet.●

Idle Time: The **Hidden Cost Pressure** on **Essential Service** Fleets

For essential service fleets, productivity is rarely measured simply by miles travelled or vehicles deployed. The real challenge is ensuring the right people, equipment and vehicles arrive where they are needed, on time and every time, while operating under growing financial and operational pressure.

That is why idle time has become an increasingly significant issue. Unlike fuel, leasing or maintenance costs, idle time does not appear as a clearly identifiable invoice. Instead, it sits quietly in the background, absorbed into lost productivity, operational delays, unnecessary fleet growth and increasing pressure on frontline services.

For many operators, it has become a significant hidden cost within day-to-day fleet operations.

Vehicles Standing Still While Costs Continue Moving

Essential service fleets operate within highly unpredictable environments.

Housing repairs overrun. Utility works are delayed by permits or traffic management issues. Waste and highways teams lose valuable time to congestion, depot bottlenecks and fragmented scheduling. Community transport services work against constantly shifting demand.

The result is that vehicles often spend far longer inactive than organisations realise. Not parked overnight or off the road for maintenance, but stationary between jobs while crews wait for materials, authorisation, revised instructions or access to sites.

And while the vehicle remains still, the costs attached to it continue moving.

Lease payments continue. Depreciation continues. Labour costs continue. Yet operational targets remain unchanged.

The Operational Reality Behind the Numbers

For many fleets, utilisation reporting still focuses heavily on vehicle availability rather than productive output.

A van may technically be *"in service"* throughout the day while spending long periods inactive at depots, temporary works locations or between poorly sequenced tasks.

In many cases, operational complexity masks inefficiency.

The issue is not always a shortage of work. More often, it is the disconnect between work allocation, workforce movement and vehicle deployment.

...cont'd on page **42**

Sixt van & truck UK Announces **Partnership** with **Autoglass®** to Support **National Fleet Operations**

SIXT van & truck, a leading provider of commercial vehicle rental solutions in the UK, has entered a new partnership with Autoglass®, a specialist in vehicle glass repair, replacement and recalibration services.

The partnership will see Autoglass® support the SIXT van & truck fleet across the UK, delivering a fully integrated solution for vehicle glass repair, replacement and Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS) recalibration. This ensures vehicles remain safe, compliant and ready for customers, while helping to minimise operational disruption.

As vehicle technology continues to evolve, the increasing presence of ADAS features means that specialist expertise is essential following windscreen replacement. Through this partnership, SIXT van & truck benefits from Autoglass®'s technical capability, national coverage and streamlined service model, helping maintain high fleet availability and consistent service delivery nationwide.

A key focus for SIXT van & truck is reducing vehicle downtime and maintaining uptime for customers. Autoglass®'s one-appointment solution for both glass replacement and ADAS recalibration, combined with its in-house supply chain, enables faster turnaround times and a more efficient repair process.

The partnership also brings strong operational support, including dedicated account management, performance reporting and continuous improvement initiatives. This aligns with SIXT van & truck's commitment to working with partners who act as a seamless extension of its own team and contribute to a high-quality customer experience.

Sustainability is another important element of the collaboration. Autoglass® operates a repair-first approach wherever possible, reducing waste and lowering carbon impact compared to full replacement. This complements SIXT van & truck's broader commitment to responsible fleet management and its growing focus on lower-emission mobility solutions.

Oliver Thompson, Business Development Manager, Autoglass®, said:

"Our partnership with SIXT van & truck is focused on one clear priority: Keeping their customers moving. We understand how critical vehicle uptime is, and our role is to provide a seamless, reliable service that supports their operations every day.

"By delivering a fully integrated solution, from glass repair and replacement through to ADAS recalibration, we're able to minimise disruption and get vehicles safely back on the road as quickly as possible.

"We're proud to work closely with the SIXT van & truck team as an extension of their operation, continuously improving how we support their fleet and the customers who rely on it."

Jim Williams, Head of Operations, SIXT van & truck UK, said:

"Minimising downtime and keeping our customers moving is critical to everything we do. As vehicle technology becomes more advanced, having a partner with the right technical expertise, national coverage and operational strength is essential.

"Autoglass® brings all of this together, alongside a strong service culture that aligns with our own. This partnership allows us to continue delivering a dependable, high-quality experience for our customers, wherever they operate in the UK."

The agreement reflects SIXT van & truck's continued focus on building strong partnerships with established, trusted providers that enhance service quality and operational reliability. By working with trusted specialists, the business ensures its fleet is supported by expert knowledge and efficient processes at every stage of the vehicle lifecycle.

As SIXT van & truck continues to expand its UK footprint, strategic partnerships such as this play a key role in maintaining consistent standards across its growing network. The business remains focused on delivering flexible, transparent and reliable fleet solutions, enabling customers to operate with confidence.

Alongside its modern diesel fleet, SIXT van & truck continues to support customers transitioning to electric vehicles, complemented by telematics solutions that enhance visibility, safety and efficiency across fleet operations.●

To find out more visit: **https://sixtvanandtruck.com**

...cont'd from page **40**

That gap creates operational drag — vehicles are available, but not being used effectively.

Why the Problem is Getting Worse

Several pressures are making idle time increasingly difficult to control.

Frontline fleet operations now cover wider geographic areas, operate under tighter compliance requirements and face ongoing driver shortages alongside greater reliance on contractors.

At the same time, many organisations still operate with disconnected systems between fleet, workforce planning and service delivery teams.

Fleet managers may know where vehicles are. Operational teams know where the jobs are. But the two are not always aligned in real time.

The consequence is inefficiency that gradually builds across the working day, missed time between jobs, unnecessary return journeys and vehicles spending extended periods inactive despite high service demand.

The Financial Impact Many Organisations Underestimate

Idle time rarely appears as a standalone issue within budget reporting, yet its influence on wider fleet costs can be substantial.

As utilisation falls:

- fleet sizes often increase to compensate for lost productivity
- replacement pressure grows without corresponding output gains
- overtime and subcontractor dependency rise
- operational resilience becomes more expensive to maintain

In some essential service fleets, vehicles are effectively retained to absorb inefficiencies within operational systems rather than genuine service demand.

That distinction matters.

As financial pressure intensifies across local authorities and public services, many organisations are beginning to recognise that historic fleet growth has sometimes concealed wider workflow inefficiencies for years.

A Shift in Thinking

The fleets beginning to address idle time most effectively are changing the way they measure performance.

Rather than focusing solely on vehicle availability or utilisation percentages, they are asking more operationally focused questions:

- How many productive hours does each vehicle deliver?
- How much downtime exists between completed tasks?
- Which depots experience the highest inactivity levels?
- Are vehicle allocations aligned with operational reality?

This is gradually shifting idle time away from being viewed as an unavoidable consequence of frontline service delivery and towards being treated as a measurable operational cost.

Where Improvement is Starting to Happen

Some fleets are already reducing idle time through relatively straightforward operational changes.

These include:

- integrating telematics with job scheduling systems
- improving depot dispatch coordination
- reducing unnecessary return-to-base journeys
- reviewing vehicle allocation against actual service demand
- using utilisation data to reshape shift planning and deployment patterns

Importantly, most of these improvements are operational rather than technological.

In many cases, the issue is not a lack of data. It is a lack of alignment between the systems and the teams using it.

The Cost Line Hiding Inside Every Fleet Budget

For organisations under pressure to improve efficiency, idle time presents a difficult challenge because it does not behave like a conventional cost line.

Instead, it hides within wider operational pressures:

- oversized fleets
- rising contractor spend
- reduced workforce productivity
- growing replacement costs
- increasing operational inefficiency

Because the impact is dispersed across multiple areas, it is often accepted as part of everyday operations.

But that mindset is beginning to change.

For essential service fleets, the question is no longer simply how many vehicles an organisation operates.

Increasingly, it is how effectively those vehicles are being used once they leave the depot.●

"A vehicle may be standing still, but the costs attached to it never stop moving and for many essential service fleets, that hidden operational drag is becoming impossible to ignore."

From tax relief to operational reality

Fleet professionals are looking beyond Government support and keeping a realistic eye on cost control

The chancellor's decision to freeze fuel duty until the end of the year and provide hauliers with a 12-month road tax holiday will offer welcome relief to businesses facing rising fleet costs. However, significant financial pressures remain. Fleet managers, operators and businesses running vehicle fleets must continue to look beyond government support, identifying practical ways to control costs while maintaining a realistic view of the expenses beyond their control. Taking a proactive approach to cost management will be key to avoiding unexpected operational challenges in the months ahead.

Cost control is of course a daily priority. From managing daily mileage across an aging fleet, to SMR considerations, to minimising wear and tear charges at the end of a contract. One of the most important times to consider cost control, however, comes much earlier, at fleet procurement.

A realistic approach to fleet procurement

When fleet professionals procure new vehicles, to replace or expand a fleet, it is common for price to take centre stage. Too much focus on price alone though, can prove unrealistic. Unlike office furniture for example, fleet can't be viewed as a commodity purchase.

Too often procurement teams negotiate what they believe is 'the best price,' before moving onto the next procurement project, leaving fleet teams to manage the operational reality. In the complex fleet environment, organisations need to understand clearly what is being procured, how the service will manifest itself during the in-life period, and hidden costs that may emerge during the contract period.

In today's challenging economic climate, procurement teams must understand that fleet contracts cannot be locked down. There are many legitimate reasons why leasing companies apply price changes during the lifetime of a contract. These include manufacturer price rises, shifting residual values, interest rate changes and fluctuations in funding rates.

In addition, there will be changes in service, maintenance, and repair costs, while discount terms the leasing companies or fleet operator receive from manufacturers may change over time. Recognising that some costs may rise 'beyond your control' during the lifetime of a contract is an important part of fleet management. There are, however, practical ways to help reduce in-contract costs to help mitigate the impact.

Managing mileage

Many companies are keeping their vehicles on fleet longer, delaying outright purchase replacements or in terms of contract hire, extending existing leases. A knock-on effect of this is a trend for rising vehicle mileage, making effective mileage management increasingly important. Those businesses that fully understand the profile and nature of their fleet can maximise utilisation and better control costs.

For example, if a fleet operator is aware of the mileage accrued by each of its vehicles, they can reassign vehicles appropriate to the driver's planned journeys. Lower mileage vehicles can be used by drivers doing greater miles, while higher mileage can be given to those drivers doing shorter journeys.

Minimising wear and tear charges

As vehicles remain on fleet for longer, it is no surprise that wear and tear charges can quickly escalate. Fleet professionals can encourage their drivers to follow a structured maintenance programme, as a few simple changes could significantly reduce wear and tear costs to the business. For example, daily vehicle maintenance checks can help identify issues early and prevent minor issues from becoming more costly repairs.

Simon Staton, Client Management Director, Venson Automotive Solutions

Likewise, not rectifying accident damage quickly after it occurs can result in a significantly higher repair bill at the end of a lease, not to mention employer duty of care concerns as an employee could be driving a vehicle that may not be fit-for-purpose, risking their safety and that of other road users.

As rising fuel costs continue to place financial strain on fleets across the UK, the fuel tax freeze will help provide a modicum of cost stability. However, while government kicks the can down the road, those fleets that keep an eye on cost control will be better placed to deliver stronger, long-term operational performance.

Get in Touch
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www.venson.com

CheckedSafe

Why **Digital Vehicle Checks** Are **No Longer Optional** for **Modern Fleets**

For years, daily vehicle checks have been viewed by many operators as little more than a compliance exercise. A legal requirement that drivers complete before starting work, often with paperwork that ends up in a folder, never to be looked at again unless something goes wrong.

The reality is that vehicle checks are far more important than just helping businesses satisfy their legal obligations.

When implemented properly, they become one of the most powerful tools available for improving safety, reducing vehicle downtime, protecting drivers, and defending businesses when incidents occur.

At CheckedSafe, we recognised this challenge over a decade ago. Paper-based systems were creating unnecessary risk, limited visibility, and poor audit trails. Important defects were being missed, paperwork was getting lost, and fleet managers often had no real-time visibility of the condition of their vehicles.

That's why we developed the CheckedSafe app, one of the UK's leading digital vehicle compliance platforms, now used by thousands of organisations operating cars, vans, HGVs, plant, machinery and specialist equipment across the country.

Today, our customers range from SMEs managing a handful of vehicles through to some of the UK's largest fleet operators, including major logistics providers, local authorities, utility companies and national service fleets.

The principle remains simple: making vehicle compliance easier whilst creating a complete, defensible record of every inspection, defect and corrective action.

More Than Just a Vehicle Check

A common misconception is that vehicle checking is simply about identifying defects before a vehicle leaves the depot.

Whilst that remains critically important, modern fleet operations require far greater visibility.

The CheckedSafe platform allows organisations to create fully bespoke inspection templates tailored to their specific requirements. Whether a fleet operates HGVs, LCVs, company cars, specialist plant or engineering equipment, inspection forms can be customised to reflect the exact questions required.

This flexibility ensures drivers are completing inspections relevant to the assets they are operating, whilst managers receive consistent, high-quality data across the organisation.

Every inspection is time stamped, date stamped and securely stored, creating a complete audit trail that can be accessed instantly whenever required.

Turning Compliance Into Evidence

One of the biggest challenges facing fleet operators today is demonstrating that they have fulfilled their duty of care obligations.

In the event of a DVSA investigation, insurance claim, public complaint or legal dispute, being able to prove what checks were completed and when can be just as important as completing the checks themselves.

Paper records can be lost, damaged or completed retrospectively. Digital records provide a level of accountability and transparency that traditional systems simply cannot match.

Every action within the CheckedSafe platform is recorded and easily searchable. Managers can see when inspections were completed, who completed them, what defects were identified and what actions were subsequently taken.

This creates what many operators describe as legal defensibility, providing clear evidence that appropriate processes were followed and that vehicle safety was being actively managed.

For transport managers, fleet managers and compliance teams, this level of auditability is becoming increasingly important as regulatory scrutiny continues to increase.

Capturing Defects Before They Become Downtime

Vehicle defects rarely appear overnight.

Minor issues often develop gradually before eventually resulting in costly breakdowns, roadside prohibitions or vehicles being taken out of service.

By encouraging regular inspections and immediate defect reporting, operators can identify problems earlier and take corrective action before they escalate into major issues.

The CheckedSafe app allows drivers to report defects instantly, complete with photographs, notes and supporting evidence. Notifications can be sent directly to relevant managers, engineers or maintenance providers, helping accelerate response times and improve communication across the organisation.

The result is not only improved compliance but often reduced maintenance costs and improved vehicle availability.

Managing Defects During Service

Vehicle safety doesn't stop once a driver has completed their morning walkaround.

Many defects occur whilst vehicles are in service, particularly within demanding fleet environments where vehicles may be covering hundreds of miles each day or operating in challenging conditions.

The CheckedSafe platform enables drivers to report defects during service as soon as they are identified.

Whether it's tyre damage, bodywork damage, warning lights, equipment failures or any other safety concern, reports can be submitted immediately through the app, ensuring management teams are informed without delay.

This helps organisations make informed decisions about vehicle usage, maintenance scheduling and operational risk before a minor issue develops into a major problem.

Streamlining Accident Reporting

Accidents and incidents are an unfortunate reality for many fleets. Accidents aren't always avoidable, but not recording them properly is avoidable.

The way information is captured immediately after an incident can significantly impact insurance claims, investigations and liability assessments.

The CheckedSafe platform includes accident reporting functionality that allows drivers to record key information at the scene, including photographs, locations, notes and supporting evidence.

Rather than relying on memory hours or days later, organisations receive accurate information whilst events are still fresh.

This not only improves internal reporting processes but can also provide valuable evidence when dealing with insurers, investigators and third parties.

Supporting Safer Fleet Operations

Technology alone does not create a safe fleet culture, but it can provide the visibility needed to support one.

By giving managers real-time access to compliance data, defect trends and inspection records, organisations can identify recurring issues, monitor driver engagement and focus attention where it is needed most.

Instead of reacting to problems after they occur, businesses can take a more proactive approach to vehicle safety and compliance management.

For many of our customers, the greatest benefit is not simply digitising paperwork, it's gaining confidence that vehicles are being checked properly, defects are being managed effectively and evidence is available whenever it is needed.

Looking Forward

Fleet compliance continues to evolve. Regulatory expectations are increasing, vehicles are becoming more complex and organisations are under growing pressure to demonstrate robust governance and duty of care processes.

Digital compliance platforms are no longer a future consideration, they are rapidly becoming a fundamental part of modern fleet management.

At CheckedSafe, our mission has always been to help organisations move beyond basic compliance and create safer, more efficient and more defensible fleet operations.

Because when it comes to vehicle safety, having the evidence is just as important as doing the check in the first place.●

Inside the Build: Engineering Durable Utility Trailers

Introduction

For more than 25 years, Towmate Trailers has supplied durable towing solutions to industries including utilities, construction, landscaping and civil engineering. Known for its focus on safety, innovation and customer-led design, the company continues to develop trailers built for demanding working environments.

Essential Fleet Manager Magazine spoke with Steve Bradshaw, Managing Director of Towmate Trailers, about what makes a durable utility trailer, the importance of engineering and design, and why understanding customer requirements is key to building trailers that last.

Interview

Q: What should buyers look for when assessing the durability of a utility trailer?

The first thing to consider is the trailer's foundation – the chassis. The materials used and the chassis's engineering have a major impact on the trailer's lifespan and performance. Buyers should look beyond headline specifications and understand how the trailer has been designed and manufactured to cope with real-world working conditions.

Q: Why does Towmate primarily use steel chassis construction?

Steel offers exceptional structural integrity and strength, making it ideal for demanding applications. At Towmate, our steel chassis are hot-dip galvanised, providing outstanding corrosion resistance and a long service life. The galvanising process also provides self-healing protection against minor damage and helps keep maintenance requirements to a minimum.

Q: Are there situations where aluminium is a better option?

Absolutely. Aluminium has a significant weight advantage, which can be important when payload capacity is a key consideration. Its lighter construction allows operators to maximise carrying capacity while still benefiting from a robust and durable trailer design.

Q: How important is chassis design beyond the materials used?

It's extremely important. Features such as strategically positioned cross-members help prevent flexing under load while adding strength and reinforcement to the chassis. A well-engineered chassis not only improves durability but also enhances safety and towing performance over the long term.

Q: What role do axles play in trailer durability and performance?

Axle configuration is critical. Twin-axle trailers generally offer superior stability and load distribution. They also enable advanced systems such as our pivot-axle design, which helps reduce wear on tyres and wheels while improving load security and overall safety. Better load management ultimately contributes to longer trailer life.

Q: Are there design features that improve both usability and longevity?

Definitely. We focus on practical features that deliver long-term benefits. Integrated tie-down points improve load security, anti-slip flooring enhances safety during loading, and LED lighting reduces maintenance requirements. We also use heavy-duty running gear, including auto-adjusting brakes and sealed-for-life bearings, which help minimise servicing while maintaining safety standards.

Q: How important is correct load distribution?

A: It's one of the most overlooked aspects of trailer ownership. Even the best-built trailer will perform better and last longer when loads are properly distributed. Proper loading improves stability, reduces stress on the chassis and running gear, and contributes to a smoother towing experience.

Q: Why is customisation becoming increasingly important for fleet operators and contractors?

Every business operates differently. A landscaping contractor has different requirements to a utility company or a construction firm. That's why we take time to understand exactly how customers intend to use their trailers. We can then recommend or build a solution that fits their specific application.

Q: What customisation options are most popular?

We regularly supply trailers with bespoke features such as different ramp configurations, winches, spare wheels and wheel chocks. We can also tailor elements such as weight capacity, ramp length and flooring materials. These adjustments can make a significant difference to efficiency, safety and ease of use in day-to-day operations.

Q: What sets Towmate apart in trailer manufacturing?

A: Our approach is centred on understanding customers' real-world requirements. We don't believe in a one-size-fits-all solution. Every trailer is designed and manufactured with durability, performance and usability in mind, ensuring customers receive a trailer built to perform and built to last.

Q: What's the key message for anyone considering a new utility trailer?

A durable trailer is about much more than ticking specification boxes. The materials, engineering, design features and customisation options all work together to create a product that delivers reliability year after year. Investing in the right trailer means towing with confidence, knowing it's designed for the job you need it to do.●

TOWMATE TRAILERS

To find out more visit: **www.towmatetrailers.com**

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TOWMATE TRAILERS

TRL Appointed to Develop the First National Blue Light Standard for UK Police Vehicles

The Transport Research Laboratory (TRL) has been commissioned by the Metropolitan Police Service, on behalf of the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC), to develop a new national Fleet Blue Light Standard for emergency vehicle warning systems used across UK policing.

The project marks the first coordinated effort to create a unified, evidence-based standard for blue light configurations on police vehicles nationwide.

Addressing Inconsistency Across Forces

At present, all 43 UK police forces use bespoke blue light setups on marked vehicles, including motorcycles, cars, vans and HGVs. This has led to significant variation in design and deployment, creating inconsistencies that can affect both operational efficiency and safety.

The new standard aims to reduce that variation by introducing a single national approach based on research, operational data and frontline requirements.

It will cover a wide range of policing scenarios, including emergency response driving, pursuits and on-scene deployments, and will be designed to perform effectively in both urban and rural environments, during both day and night operations.

Improving Safety and Interoperability

The introduction of a national framework is intended to enhance safety for both officers and the public, while also improving interoperability between forces and supporting more consistent vehicle design and procurement decisions.

It also forms part of the wider NPCC Police Vehicle Standardisation Programme, which aims to bring greater alignment across UK police fleets and ensure standards remain adaptable to future technology and operational needs.

Jason Powell, Director of Fleet Services at the Metropolitan Police Service and NPCC portfolio lead, said the initiative represents a major step forward in standardising one of the most safety-critical aspects of police vehicles.

He said the programme draws on best practice from across UK forces and will establish a clear national benchmark based on operational evidence and real-world experience. He added that consistency in blue light systems is essential for both safety and effectiveness, while still allowing flexibility for future policing requirements.

Evidence-Led Approach to Design

Transport Research Laboratory (TRL) Principal Consultant Ianto Guy said the work will focus on ensuring emergency lighting systems are effective across a wide range of environments and operational conditions.

He highlighted that the project is grounded in real-world policing needs and aims to strengthen both officer safety and public protection through improved visibility and consistency.

He also noted that the work builds on TRL's wider experience supporting UK police forces, including the previous development of national technical standards for police fleet management across the vehicle lifecycle.

Collaboration Across Policing and Industry

TRL will continue working closely with the NPCC and policing stakeholders throughout the development process to ensure the final standard reflects frontline operational requirements and can support modern policing challenges.

The organisation also supports police forces in the UK and internationally through data-led research, technical expertise and capability development aimed at improving road safety, enforcement effectiveness and long-term prevention strategies.●

SFS
Specialist Fleet Services

A **First Year** of **Seamless Service** Delivery and **Strong Partnership** Success

SFS on-site workshop at EFDC ensuring proactive maintenance and service continuity

EFDC RCV fleet in service

Epping Forest District Council (EFDC) is celebrating both the opening of its permanent operations hub at North Weald Airfield and the first anniversary of its new waste and recycling service. The new service launched in November 2024 and is delivered by the Council's wholly owned Teckal company, Terra Verde Services Ltd (TVS).

TVS was established by EFDC to manage the day-to-day delivery of frontline environmental services, combining public sector oversight with a dedicated and operationally focused delivery model.

A key factor in the successful rollout of the new service delivered by TVS was the Council's fleet partner, Specialist Fleet Services Ltd (SFS). Following a comprehensive tender process, SFS was awarded an eight-year contract to supply and maintain a fleet of 52 waste and recycling vehicles.

SFS, a contract hire, fleet, and workshop management company, brings more than 30 years of experience working with local authorities.

Ahead of the service launch, two weekends of staff inductions were held. These included issuing PPE, familiarisation with vehicle technologies, and guidance on company values and behavioural policies. SFS supported these sessions by providing demonstration vehicles, training, and introductions to the workshop setup.

James Warwick, Service Director Contracts, Partnerships & Procurement at EFDC, said:

"It's been a great first year. We hit all the deadlines, which included setting up temporary facilities and a pop-up workshop, Tupe transferring 140 staff to TVS, carrying out inductions and sourcing a new fleet.

"Our fleet partner SFS has been crucial to the successful roll out of the new service and in keeping operations running smoothly. They ensured that all the vehicles were in situ ahead of the start date. We went live with the new service on schedule in November 2024 and performance has been excellent. We've had no service disruptions, which is fantastic."

The Back Story

EFDC's waste management service had been outsourced for over 20 years, most recently to Biffa under a 10-year (+10-year extension option) contract. Faced with a significant rise in costs when considering the extension, the Council undertook a full review of its options.

A consultant was engaged to support three key workstreams:

- Designing and building a new permanent operations hub
- Exploring options for a new fleet
- Establishing a wholly owned Teckal company to operate the service

A suitable site was identified at North Weald Airfield. Previously used as a holding area for post-Brexit lorry checks, the government-owned land offered extensive hardstanding space and was now vacant. The Council commissioned both a temporary operations hub, ready for service commencement, and a permanent facility including offices and a workshop.

The Council opted against outright vehicle purchase for several reasons: the need for rapid deployment, flexibility to adopt alternative fuel technologies, challenges in recruiting specialist maintenance staff, and the risks associated with end-of-life vehicle disposal. Contract hire offered a more flexible and lower-risk solution.

A Fleet Partner with Proven Experience

SFS is a well-established fleet and workshop partner for local authorities, known for reliability and long-term client relationships, with many councils now in their third or fourth consecutive contract period.

As part of Paragon Banking Group, SFS benefits from strong financial backing. It also operates a vehicle rental division, CTS Hire, which provides additional vehicle availability and flexibility when required.

James added:

"SFS having its own vehicle rental arm helps our service continuity and resilience. Recently we had an issue with some caged vehicles that weren't quite right for a specific job. SFS sourced some suitable vehicles from CTS Hire and they arrived within a day."

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Workshop Expertise

Vehicle maintenance and workshop management are increasingly complex challenges for councils, particularly where facilities are outdated or budgets constrained.

SFS addresses this through a national network of 15 depots and mobile engineers who provide cover, training, and specialist support. This depth of expertise allows councils to benefit from best practice and shared knowledge.

Bob Sweetland, Managing Director at SFS, said:

"Workshops are an area where we can make a big difference in terms of cost savings. Whether it's the move to lower emission technologies or the introduction of mandatory food waste collections, we can provide access to potentially expensive new vehicle technologies, whilst removing the need to maintain replace or dispose of vehicles as well as taking care of the recruitment and training of staff."

Rosa Tanfield, Managing Director, TVS said:

"It speaks volumes about the high standards delivered by SFS that our service has never been affected by vehicles being off-road. SFS looks after all the vehicles on-site and everything – servicing, MOTs and repairs – are planned on a schedule. Plus, we have a spare vehicle just in case. Even where we've had minor disruption such as a breakdown or minor accident, we've been able to send out a vehicle to collect the following day."

Best Practice in Action

Strong governance underpins the partnership, with quarterly and annual review meetings involving senior representatives from all three organisations. These include KPI reporting on service delivery, vehicle inspections, MOTs, tyre performance, and damage analysis to inform training needs.

A dedicated SFS account manager is also present on-site weekly, ensuring consistent communication and responsiveness to operational issues.

James added:

"The relationship with SFS has been pivotal to enabling us to deliver the new service in an efficient, sustainable and professional way. SFS has extensive experience in municipal fleet and workshop provision, and they have left no stone unturned to fully understand the operational challenges we face. Together we have developed best practice.

"The partnership works well and there is a spirit of give and take. SFS is very flexible to our needs. For example, if they have occasion when one of their own vehicles is in the area and needs work, we are happy for them to repair the vehicle at our site. Similarly, if one of their own vehicles happens to be on site and we need to use it they are happy to oblige."

TVS road sweeper supporting street cleansing operations

Food Waste Collections Delivered

SFS also played a crucial role in enabling EFDC to meet the 31 March 2026 deadline for introducing separate food waste collections.

James explained:

"We were already collecting food waste, co-mingled with garden waste on a weekly basis and we were going to continue doing so until 2027 but then the disposal authority instructed us to change. We had to find a way to carry out separate food and garden waste collections and introduce a subscription service for garden waste, quickly. We turned to SFS for help and they pulled out all the stops to deliver a fleet of food waste collection vehicles in time for us to meet the deadline."

Added Value

The permanent operations hub is now fully operational, with SFS running a modern workshop designed with future expansion in mind.

New office facilities, including a canteen and showers, have been well received by staff. The site also offers ample parking, on-site fuel, and EV charging infrastructure. Staff motivation, according to Rosa, is *"high."*

Beyond operational improvements and cost efficiencies, the partnership also delivers social value. SFS has committed to creating local employment and apprenticeship opportunities, with recruitment for the first apprentice technician already underway. In addition, SFS will donate £1,000 annually to a Council-nominated organisation or charity.

Onwards and Upwards

Looking ahead, EFDC, TVS and SFS are focused on continuous improvement.

James commented:

"At year 4 we will probably need to replace some of our street sweepers. The process has already started and SFS is arranging for manufacturers to come to the depot and demonstrate their machines. We will create a specification, SFS will short list and there's a bidders' day. Our operatives will get the opportunity to try out the machines and give us their feedback before a final decision is made."

Further evaluations are also underway around alternative fuels, with EFDC sharing insights and experiences with other local authorities.

Added James:

"In fact we have already made some introductions between SFS and other councils who we think could benefit from their expertise."

Looking Ahead

In time, the contract will transfer from EFDC to TVS, reflecting the day-to-day operational relationship between TVS and SFS. The Council will retain an oversight role.

James explained:

"When we were first looking at procuring vehicles TVS wasn't even set up and EFDC had to carry out the procurement exercise. However, we plan to hand over the agreement to TVS at the end of the 2nd year anniversary. It doesn't change anything but as TVS and SFS liaise about daily operations it makes sense that they co-manage future vehicle requirements." ●

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AI Isn't Replacing **Fleet Managers** – It's **Changing How They Work**

Artificial intelligence has become one of the most discussed technologies in fleet. Depending on who you ask, it is either the solution to every operational challenge or a threat to traditional job roles.

For fleet operators, the reality lies somewhere between those two extremes.

While much of the public conversation around AI focuses on autonomous vehicles and futuristic concepts, artificial intelligence is already influencing fleet operations in practical and measurable ways. From identifying risky driving behaviours and predicting maintenance requirements to streamlining administration and improving vehicle utilisation, AI is quietly becoming part of everyday fleet management.

The question is no longer whether artificial intelligence will impact fleet operations. The question is how fleet managers can use it to their advantage.

Most Fleets Are Already Using AI

One of the biggest misconceptions about artificial intelligence is that operators will need to adopt it in the future.

In reality, many fleets already use AI-powered technologies every day.

Telematics systems increasingly rely on artificial intelligence to analyse driver behaviour and identify risk patterns. Driver monitoring cameras can detect distraction, fatigue, mobile phone use and other unsafe behaviours in real time. Some maintenance platforms can already identify potential vehicle faults before they lead to costly breakdowns.

The difference is that much of this technology operates in the background. Fleet managers do not need to be data scientists or technology experts to benefit from the insights it provides.

In many respects, AI is following a similar path to telematics. Initially viewed as a specialist technology, it has gradually become an accepted part of fleet management.

Moving from Reactive to Predictive Operations

Perhaps the biggest opportunity AI presents is its ability to help fleets become more proactive.

Historically, fleet management has often been reactive. A vehicle breaks down and is repaired. A collision occurs and corrective action follows. Rising maintenance costs trigger an investigation into vehicle performance.

Artificial intelligence has the potential to change that model.

By analysing large volumes of operational data, AI can identify trends and warning signs before they become significant problems. Maintenance requirements can be predicted earlier. Driver risk can be identified before incidents occur. Vehicle utilisation patterns can reveal inefficiencies long before they impact productivity.

For fleet operators under pressure to control costs and improve efficiency, the ability to anticipate issues rather than simply respond to them could prove transformational.

The Untapped Value of Fleet Data

Most organisations now collect more fleet data than ever before.

Vehicles generate telematics information, maintenance records, inspection reports, fuel usage data and driver performance metrics. The challenge is often not collecting information but understanding what to do with it.

This is where artificial intelligence can offer real value.

Rather than requiring fleet managers to manually review vast amounts of information, AI can identify trends, highlight anomalies and present actionable insights. It effectively acts as a filter, helping operators focus on the issues that matter most.

As fleet operations become increasingly connected, the ability to turn data into meaningful decisions may become one of the most important competitive advantages available to operators.

Solving the Administration Challenge

Fleet management is often as much about paperwork as it is about vehicles.

Compliance reporting, inspections, maintenance scheduling, licence checking and incident management all require significant administrative effort. For many fleet teams, time spent on administration can limit the time available for strategic planning and operational improvement.

AI is increasingly being used to automate routine processes, review inspection data, generate reports and flag potential issues

"The future of fleet management is not about automation replacing people; it's about technology empowering better decisions."

that require attention.

This does not remove the need for oversight, but it can reduce the burden of repetitive tasks and allow fleet managers to focus on activities that add greater value to the organisation.

At a time when many businesses are being asked to achieve more with limited resources, that efficiency could become increasingly important.

Human Expertise Remains Essential

One of the most common concerns surrounding artificial intelligence is whether it will eventually replace human roles.

For fleet management, that seems highly unlikely.

Technology can analyse data, identify patterns and generate recommendations. What it cannot do is understand organisational culture, manage driver relationships, balance competing business priorities or exercise professional judgement in complex situations.

Fleet management remains fundamentally a people-centred profession. Decisions often involve factors that extend well beyond the data itself.

The most successful fleet managers of the future are unlikely to be those competing with AI. Instead, they will be those who understand how to use AI effectively while applying the experience and judgement that technology cannot replicate.

New Opportunities for Electric Fleets

Artificial intelligence could become particularly valuable as fleet electrification continues.

Managing charging schedules, vehicle availability, route planning and energy costs introduces a new level of operational complexity. AI systems can help optimise charging strategies, identify suitable vehicles for specific journeys and improve utilisation based on real-world operational data.

For organisations transitioning to electric vehicles, these capabilities may help maximise vehicle availability while reducing operational costs.

As fleets become more connected and energy management becomes increasingly important, AI is likely to play a growing role in supporting electrification strategies.

The Cybersecurity Question

As with any connected technology, increased reliance on data brings new considerations around cybersecurity.

Fleet operators will need confidence that vehicle systems, telematics platforms and management software are secure and that sensitive operational data is adequately protected.

However, cybersecurity should not be viewed as a barrier to AI adoption. Instead, it should form part of a broader digital strategy that ensures new technologies are implemented responsibly and securely.

In many cases, AI itself is being used to strengthen cybersecurity by identifying unusual activity and potential threats more quickly than traditional systems.

The Future Is Closer Than Many Think

Artificial intelligence is unlikely to transform fleet management overnight. There will be no single moment when fleets suddenly become AI-driven.

Instead, AI will continue to be integrated into the systems operators already use, gradually improving decision-making, operational visibility and efficiency.

Much like telematics before it, artificial intelligence is set to become another standard fleet management tool.

The organisations that benefit most will not necessarily be those with the largest technology budgets. They will be the ones that understand how to combine data, technology and human expertise to make better decisions.

For fleet managers, the future is not about being replaced by artificial intelligence. It is about learning how to work alongside it.

And for many operators, that future has already arrived.●

Using Fleet Data to Strengthen Risk Management and Control Insurance Costs

Introduction

As fleet operators increasingly adopt telematics, vehicle cameras and connected fleet technologies, the role of data in insurance is evolving rapidly. Insurers are looking beyond claims history to gain a deeper understanding of how fleets manage risk day to day, creating new opportunities for operators to influence premiums, improve claims outcomes and strengthen overall fleet performance. In this issue's Insurance Brief, Ben Peters of Hummingbird Insurance explains why fleet data is becoming an essential part of modern insurance management and what this means for operators.

Interview

Q: Traditionally, fleet insurance has been based largely on claims history. How is that changing?

Historically, insurers have looked backwards when assessing risk. Claims frequency, claims costs, vehicle types and fleet size were often the key factors influencing premiums. While those elements remain important, insurers are increasingly interested in understanding how a fleet is operating today.

The rise of telematics, vehicle cameras and connected fleet systems means operators can now provide real-time insights into driver behaviour, vehicle usage, route risks and overall fleet performance. This allows insurers to build a much more accurate picture of risk rather than relying solely on historical claims data.

Q: Why has fleet data become so valuable to insurers?

Data helps insurers move from making assumptions about risk to understanding it more precisely. Information such as speeding events, harsh braking, collision trends and vehicle utilisation provides valuable insight into how effectively a fleet is being managed.

For insurers, that means better underwriting decisions. For fleet operators, it creates an opportunity to demonstrate that they are actively managing and reducing risk rather than simply being judged on what happened in the past.

Q: Many fleets already collect telematicsdata. Are they making the most of it?

Not always. Collecting data is only the first step. The real value comes from analysing that information and using it to drive improvements across the operation.

*"The fleets that can **clearly demonstrate** how they **manage risk** are likely to be best placed to control costs, **improve insurer relationships** and **strengthen** long-term resilience."*

Telematics can highlight trends that support driver coaching, targeted training programmes, route optimisation and vehicle utilisation reviews. When operators use data to improve driver behaviour and operational standards, they often see reductions in collisions, vehicle damage and associated costs.

That's where insurers are increasingly paying attention because it demonstrates a proactive approach to risk management.

Q: How can fleet data strengthen an operator's position during insurance renewals?

Fleet data provides evidence. Operators can demonstrate measurable improvements in driver behaviour, claims frequency, security and compliance rather than relying on anecdotal explanations. Importantly, leading risk indicators help prevent future claims, creating more informed renewal discussions and strengthening conversations around pricing and risk.

Q: What role does fleet data play when managing claims?

It can make a significant difference. Vehicle cameras and telematics systems provide objective evidence of what happened before, during and after an incident.

This can help accelerate claims investigations, reduce disputes over liability and, in some cases, protect businesses against fraudulent or exaggerated claims. Faster claims resolution often means less vehicle downtime, reduced administration and a quicker return to normal operations.

For many fleets, the claims benefits alone can justify investment in data-driven technologies.

Q: Are the benefits of telematics and fleet data limited to insurance?

Not at all. In fact, some of the biggest benefits sit outside insurance.

The same data used to demonstrate risk management can also improve fuel efficiency, reduce vehicle wear and tear, support preventative maintenance programmes, enhance driver safety and strengthen compliance management. Fleet operators are under constant pressure to improve efficiency and control costs, and data plays an increasingly important role in achieving those objectives.

Q: Looking ahead, what do you see happening in the fleet insurance market?

The fleet insurance market is becoming increasingly data-led. Insurers are moving beyond historic claims data and placing greater value on leading risk indicators that demonstrate how operators identify and prevent future incidents. Fleets that can evidence this will be better positioned to demonstrate risk quality, control costs and build stronger long-term insurer relationships.

Q: What is your key message for fleet operators?

Insurance is no longer simply about transferring risk. Increasingly, it's about understanding, managing and reducing risk through accurate operational data.

Fleets that embrace telematics and fleet analytics can strengthen safety performance, improve efficiency and take a far more proactive approach to insurance management. Those that can demonstrate strong risk controls and measurable performance improvements are likely to be best placed for the future.●

About Hummingbird Insurance Services

Ben Peters is co-founder of Hummingbird Insurance Services, specialising in data-led fleet insurance. He works with commercial operators to improve claims outcomes, reduce total cost of risk, and bring greater visibility to fleet performance through practical, technology-driven solutions.

HUMMINGBIRD INSURANCE SERVICES

EXPERT INSIGHT

Beyond Dashboards: How Fleets Can Turn Data Into Real-World Safety Improvements

With **Mark Cartwright**, Head of Commercial Vehicle Incident Prevention - National Highways

Introduction

Fleet operators have never had access to more technology, data or driver insight than they do today. Telematics platforms, AI-enabled cameras, ADAS systems and connected vehicle technologies are now generating a constant stream of information across modern fleets. Yet despite this flood of data, many organisations are still struggling to translate information into meaningful safety improvements and measurable operational outcomes.

Mark Cartwright, Head of Commercial Vehicle Incident Prevention at National Highways, says the industry has reached a critical turning point. The challenge is no longer collecting data, it is knowing how to use it effectively.

That issue sits at the heart of the new practitioner-led report, Fleet Data Outcomes: Translating Telematics Data into Safety Results, produced through the Driving for Better Business (DfBB) programme. Bringing together real-world experiences from fleet professionals across multiple sectors, the report explores how organisations can move beyond dashboards and alerts to create genuine behaviour change, stronger safety cultures and better operational performance.

Essential Fleet Manager spoke to Mark about why the report was created, the growing challenge of data overload, and why leadership, trust and culture ultimately matter far more than technology alone.

Interview

Q: What prompted National Highways and the Driving for Better Business programme to produce the Fleet Data Outcomes report now?

The industry has changed enormously over the last decade. When telematics first started becoming mainstream, the challenge was persuading fleets to adopt the technology. Today, the situation is completely different. Most operators already have multiple systems generating vast amounts of information every day.

What we kept hearing from fleet professionals was that they weren't struggling to get data — they were struggling to turn it into action. Fleets are dealing with telematics platforms, AI cameras, ADAS systems, vehicle sensors and compliance tools all at once. The volume can be overwhelming.

We wanted this report to focus on practical experience from people managing these challenges every day. Not theory, not sales messaging, but genuine operational insight from practitioners across different sectors.

Q: One of the report's strongest messages is that technology alone doesn't solve safety challenges. Why is that so important?

Because technology is only a tool. Collecting data is relatively easy now. The difficult part is creating the right culture, leadership and behaviours around it.

The fleets seeing the best results are not necessarily the ones with the most advanced technology. They're the organisations that know what outcomes they want to achieve and have built processes around those goals.

There's a tendency in the industry to assume that more systems automatically mean safer fleets, but that isn't always true. In some cases, too much technology can actually create distraction, overload drivers and complicate decision-making.

The report repeatedly shows that the organisations making real progress are the ones translating information into action through coaching, communication and leadership engagement.

Q: Driver engagement seems to be a major theme throughout the report.

Absolutely. One of the clearest findings from the discussions was that lasting behaviour change only happens when drivers feel involved in the process rather than being monitored.

The most effective fleets treat drivers as partners in safety improvement, not as subjects of surveillance. Coaching

conversations, supportive interventions and clear communication consistently produced better long-term results than purely punitive approaches.

There are some brilliant examples in the report where organisations improved driver behaviour simply through regular conversations between line managers and drivers. Nothing dramatic, just consistency over time.

It's also important that drivers understand why technology is being introduced. When people see cameras and telematics as tools designed to protect them rather than to catch them out, attitudes change significantly.

Q: The section around camera systems is particularly interesting. Has driver perception shifted in recent years?

I think it has. Initially, there was significant concern about inward-facing cameras and monitoring systems, which was understandable. But many fleets now have real examples of camera footage protecting drivers after incidents or false claims.

Once drivers experience that protection first-hand, the conversation changes. The report includes examples of previously sceptical drivers becoming strong advocates for the technology because it helped prove they had done nothing wrong.

That's why positioning matters so much. If organisations present cameras purely as surveillance tools, resistance is inevitable. If they present them as part of a wider safety and protection strategy, acceptance tends to improve dramatically.

Q: The report also raises concerns about "technology overload" inside vehicles. Is that becoming a bigger issue?

Definitely. Modern commercial vehicles can now include multiple screens, warning systems and interfaces, all competing for the driver's attention. Individually, each system may make sense, but collectively they can fragment concentration.

Several practitioners described situations in which drivers were asked to monitor cameras, telematics screens, weighing systems, ADAS alerts and manufacturer infotainment systems simultaneously. That creates its own risks.

One of the strongest messages from experienced fleet managers was that technology should support driver awareness, not replace it. Defensive driving skills and concentration remain fundamental, regardless of how advanced the systems become.

Q: Grey fleet management also receives significant attention in the report. Why is that still such an overlooked issue?

Because it's difficult. Personal vehicles used for work often fall outside the traditional fleet structure, so organisations sometimes underestimate the level of exposure.

But the duty of care is exactly the same whether somebody is driving a company vehicle or their own car for work. In some organisations, grey fleet actually outnumbers the company fleet, yet governance can be far weaker.

Practitioners were very clear that ignoring grey fleet because it feels too complex is no longer sustainable. Organisations need visibility, accountability and minimum standards across all work-related driving.

Q: Looking ahead, where do you see fleet technology heading over the next few years?

AI is going to play a major role, particularly in predictive analytics and driver coaching. We're already seeing systems that can identify risk trends before incidents occur.

But the technology will continue to evolve faster than many organisations can keep up with. That's why the report keeps coming back to culture, governance and human judgement.

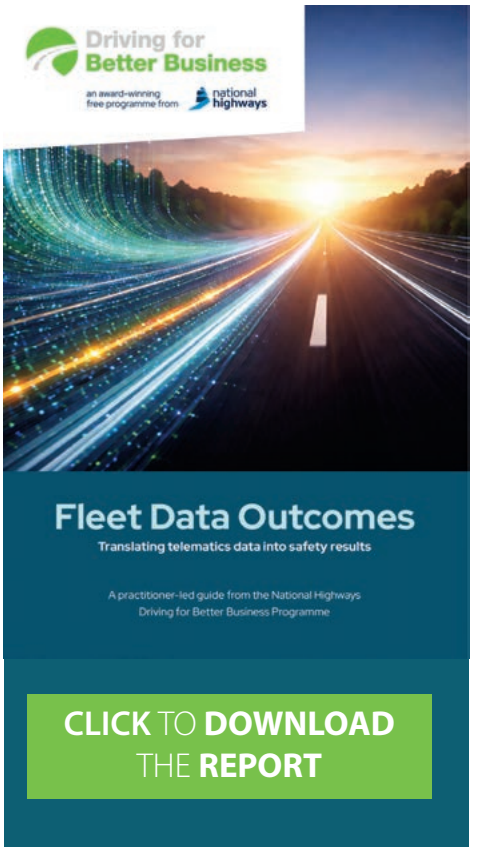
The fleets best positioned for the future won't necessarily be the ones buying every new feature. They'll be the organisations with strong leadership, engaged drivers and clear operational objectives, enabling them to evaluate technology properly.

Q: What do you hope fleet operators gain from reading the report?

That data on its own achieves nothing.

Real progress comes when organisations create cultures that turn information into action. The goal isn't better dashboards or more alerts. It's fewer collisions, fewer injuries and safer journeys for everyone using the road network.

That's what this report is really about.●



To find out more about DfBB visit: **www.drivingforbetterbusiness.com**

Tarmac Reduces Driver-Risk Levels and Collision Costs with Connected Fleet Platform

Tarmac has achieved a 30% reduction in fleet collisions after deploying an integrated multi-camera and video telematics platform developed in partnership with Motormax and Geotab.

The technology rollout, implemented across Tarmac's fleet of more than 2,000 vehicles, has also delivered significant improvements in driver behaviour, fuel efficiency, insurance performance and wider operational visibility.

Within the first 12 months of deployment, Tarmac reported:

- A reduction in high and medium-risk drivers from 40% to 6.5%
- A 25% improvement in fuel economy across the van fleet
- A 30% reduction in driver-fault collisions
- A 50% reduction in 'pulling out' incidents
- A 30% year-on-year reduction in collision repair costs
- Speeding incidents per 1,000 miles halved since implementation in May 2023

The project forms part of Tarmac's wider strategy to improve fleet safety, reduce operating costs and support more sustainable fleet operations through data-led decision making.

Improving Visibility Across a Complex Fleet Operation

Tarmac operates a large and diverse fleet that includes vans, HGVs, pickups and specialist plant equipment across seven regions and multiple business divisions. Managing operational consistency, driver safety and vehicle performance at this scale required greater visibility into fleet activity and driver behaviour.

To address this, Tarmac introduced Motormax's multi-camera technology integrated directly into the MyGeotab telematics platform via API. The combined system provides transport teams with a unified operational view, enabling managers to access telematics data and associated video footage from a single platform.

When predefined safety events occur, managers can instantly retrieve footage and supporting data, helping to improve incident investigation, driver protection and training accuracy.

Data-Driven Safety Improvements

The integrated platform allows Tarmac to monitor driver performance through objective risk scoring and event-based analysis. By combining telematics insight with real-world video evidence, the business has been able to identify trends, address risk behaviours and implement targeted interventions.

Jonathan Meddings, Fleet Risk & Compliance Manager at Tarmac, said the integrated system had transformed fleet operations and improved decision-making across the organisation.

"The integration allows managers to view telematics data and high-quality camera footage in a single platform, accelerating decision-making and streamlining fleet operations. As a result, we have already seen significant cost savings."

The data is also being used to shape targeted driver training programmes focused on specific behaviours such as speeding, seatbelt usage and procedural compliance.

Meddings added:

"The solution enables us to design training for specific issues. As a result, we have seen a reduction in speeding — both 10% and 20% over the limit incidents have halved. The data also empowers managers to have the right conversations with drivers who are not following procedure."

Faster Claims Resolution and Reduced Insurance Costs

Beyond operational improvements, the platform has strengthened collaboration between Tarmac and insurer AXA by providing clearer incident evidence and improving liability assessments.

Tarmac Head of Category Management &

SRM, Lee Green, said the business had trained its insurance claims team to utilise the platform more effectively, enabling faster claims handling and improved analysis of incident trends.

The business is also using the data to assess future safety investments, including additional camera systems where incident patterns indicate further risk reduction opportunities.

Tarmac says the return on investment from the technology has already been clearly demonstrated through reduced claims costs, lower repair expenditure and reduced management time associated with incident investigations.

Building Positive Driver Engagement

Alongside enforcement and risk reduction, Tarmac has also focused on recognising positive driving behaviour. Using bespoke Geotab reporting, the company introduced initiatives such as its '100 Club', which rewards drivers achieving perfect driver scores over extended mileage periods.

The approach is helping to reinforce safer driving habits while improving driver engagement with the technology.

James Haycock, Director at Motormax, said the project demonstrated the value of close collaboration between fleet operators and technology providers.

"This is a great example of what can be achieved when teams work closely together with a shared focus on safety. By combining the commitment and expertise of Motormax, Geotab and Tarmac, we've been able to make meaningful progress in just 12 months."

Supporting Long-Term Fleet Performance

Fleet safety data is now embedded into Tarmac's wider governance structure through regular management reporting and performance reviews, helping elevate fleet safety from a compliance function to a core operational priority.

In addition to safety gains, the platform has also delivered wider operational efficiencies, including:

- Improved personal mileage reporting to support HMRC compliance
- Better regional fleet reporting across seven operational areas
- Reduced unnecessary mileage and vehicle usage
- Improved lease mileage forecasting and vehicle allocation
- Better optimisation of specialist and higher-cost vehicles

Tarmac believes the technology will continue to deliver long-term operational value as the business expands its use of the Geotab platform and wider connected fleet capabilities.

Meddings concluded:

"Working closely with Motormax and Geotab, we are confident that we are future-proofing our fleet safety and operations. We have only utilised a small part of the Geotab platform so far, and there is significant scope to deliver even more value."●

Morgan Sindall Selects **Novuna** to **Support Fleet** and **EV Strategy**

Construction and infrastructure business Morgan Sindall Group has selected Novuna Vehicle Solutions as its new fleet and mobility provider under a six-year agreement focused on improving efficiency, driver support and long-term sustainability.

The partnership will see Novuna oversee Morgan Sindall's 3,000-vehicle company car fleet and help develop the organisation's wider mobility strategy across the business.

As part of the agreement, Novuna will provide a fully integrated fleet management service to improve operational performance and enhance the overall driver experience. The company will support day-to-day fleet operations with dedicated customer service and operational resources, helping to ensure drivers remain mobile and supported while carrying out frontline responsibilities.

The arrangement will also include further development of Morgan Sindall's salary sacrifice scheme, expanding vehicle access to a wider employee base and supporting a more flexible approach to workforce mobility.

Alongside fleet management services, Novuna has already introduced electric vehicle charging infrastructure at several Morgan Sindall locations. This includes the installation of 30 twin EV chargers at a refurbished office site, creating 60 charging sockets capable of supporting around 1,000 charging sessions each month. The infrastructure is intended to support the company's ongoing transition towards lower-emission vehicles and help reduce overall fleet-related carbon output.

The charging network will be managed through Novuna's MyNovuna Charging platform, allowing ongoing monitoring and optimisation as the partnership develops.

Additional elements of the agreement include tyre management services and a strengthened supplier network designed to improve service delivery and minimise operational disruption for drivers.

Jonathan Hall, plant director at Morgan Sindall Infrastructure, said the partnership represented an important development in the company's approach to fleet operations and driver support, adding that Novuna's focus on operational performance and sustainable mobility closely matched the organisation's long-term objectives.●

Keeping Fleets Rolling: Managing **Tyre Compliance** in a **High-Risk Environment**

Tyres are among the most frequently inspected components on any commercial vehicle, yet tyre-related defects continue to account for a significant proportion of roadside prohibitions and compliance failures.

For fleet operators, this presents a frustrating reality. Tyres are visible, measurable and relatively straightforward to maintain compared with many other aspects of vehicle compliance. Despite this, worn tread, damaged sidewalls and underinflated tyres remain common findings during roadside inspections.

The issue is rarely a lack of awareness. Most operators understand the importance of tyre safety. The challenge lies in maintaining oversight between scheduled maintenance intervals and ensuring drivers remain engaged with routine vehicle checks.

The Compliance Gap

One of the biggest misconceptions surrounding tyre management is that regular servicing alone is enough to keep fleets compliant.

In reality, tyre condition can change rapidly. Tread wear is influenced by mileage, vehicle loading, driving behaviour, road surfaces and wheel alignment. A vehicle that passes inspection today may develop a compliance issue long before its next workshop visit.

For high-mileage fleets, this creates a significant risk. As a result, tyre compliance can no longer be viewed as a periodic maintenance activity. It requires continuous monitoring and clear accountability throughout the vehicle's operational life.

More Than Tread Depth

While the legal minimum tread depth of 1.6mm across the central three-quarters of the tyre is widely understood, compliance extends far beyond a simple measurement.

Uneven wear patterns may indicate alignment or suspension issues. Cuts, bulges, exposed cords and embedded objects can all compromise safety and lead to enforcement action.

Tyres often provide an early warning of wider vehicle defects, making them a valuable indicator of overall vehicle condition. Effective inspections should therefore focus not only on legality but also on identifying potential problems before they develop into more serious mechanical failures.

The Cost of Non-Compliance

The consequences of tyre defects can be severe.

Drivers operating vehicles with defective tyres may face fines of up to £2,500 per tyre, penalty points and immediate roadside prohibitions. For operators, however, the risks extend much further.

Repeated tyre-related prohibitions can attract increased scrutiny from enforcement agencies and raise questions about wider maintenance and compliance processes. In the event of a collision, evidence of defective tyres may significantly increase corporate liability and reputational damage.

As regulatory expectations continue to rise, demonstrating effective tyre management processes is becoming just as important as correcting defects themselves.

The Role of Drivers

Daily walkaround checks remain one of the most effective tools for managing tyre compliance. Yet many fleets still struggle with inconsistent reporting, incomplete records and varying levels of driver engagement.

Industry best practice increasingly focuses on simple, structured inspection processes that drivers can complete quickly and consistently. Digital reporting tools, photographic evidence and automated reminders are helping organisations improve compliance while creating reliable audit trails.

The objective is not simply to identify defects but to provide evidence that inspections are taking place and that issues are being addressed promptly.

Grey Fleet Considerations

Tyre compliance is not limited to

company-owned vehicles.

For organisations operating grey fleet arrangements, ensuring privately owned vehicles remain roadworthy presents an additional challenge. Employers retain duty-of-care responsibilities when employees use their own vehicles for business travel, making tyre condition an important consideration.

While annual declarations provide a basic level of assurance, many organisations are introducing more robust verification processes to strengthen oversight and reduce risk.

Technology Improving Visibility

Technology is playing an increasingly important role in tyre management. Digital inspection platforms, telematics systems and fleet management software can help identify vehicles that may require closer monitoring, particularly those covering high annual mileages.

These systems also provide auditable records of inspections, maintenance activity and defect resolution, helping organisations demonstrate compliance if subjected to regulatory scrutiny.

The ability to monitor tyre condition proactively rather than reactively is becoming a key feature of modern fleet compliance strategies.

A Key Measure of Fleet Management

Although tyre compliance may appear straightforward, it remains one of the clearest indicators of how effectively a fleet is managed.

Tyres directly influence braking performance, vehicle handling, fuel efficiency and driver safety. They are also among the first components examined during roadside inspections and post-collision investigations.

For that reason, tyre condition is increasingly viewed as a reflection of an organisation's wider approach to compliance and risk management.

The message for fleet operators is simple: effective tyre compliance is not about reacting to defects when they occur. It is about creating the processes, visibility and accountability needed to prevent them from arising in the first place.●

New Car Market Enjoys Strongest May Since 2019 as EV Demand Continues to Grow

The UK new car market recorded its strongest May performance since before the pandemic, with registrations rising 7.1% to 160,662 units, according to the latest figures from the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT).

While registrations remain 12.6% below pre-pandemic levels, the result marks the best May performance since 2019 and highlights continued resilience across the automotive sector despite ongoing economic uncertainty.

Private buyers were the main driver behind the growth, with registrations increasing by 17.2% as consumers responded to an expanding choice of vehicles and increasingly competitive retail offers. Fleet demand also remained positive, rising 1.8%, and continued to underpin the market by accounting for more than half (57.1%) of all new car registrations.

The business sector was the only area to decline, falling 18.8%, although the reduction represented a relatively small volume loss of just 720 units.

Electrified Vehicles Continue to Gain Ground

The latest figures further illustrate the ongoing shift away from traditional petrol and diesel powertrains.

Petrol registrations declined by 7.1%, while diesel volumes fell 2.2% as buyers increasingly opted for electrified alternatives. Hybrid electric vehicles (HEVs) saw registrations rise by 1.8%, while plug-in hybrid electric vehicles (PHEVs) recorded a significant 23.9% increase, capturing 13.8% of the market.

Battery electric vehicles (BEVs) delivered the strongest growth, with registrations climbing 34.2% year-on-year. Electric cars accounted for 27.3% of all new registrations during May, representing the highest monthly market share achieved so far in 2026.

For fleet operators, the figures reflect a market where electric vehicle choice continues to expand rapidly. The number of BEV models available has increased by more than 25% year-to-date, providing fleet managers with a broader range of options across different vehicle segments and budgets.

Fleet Electrification Still Faces Challenges

Despite the strong growth in electric vehicle registrations, concerns remain about whether current demand levels are sufficient to meet the UK's Zero Emission Vehicle (ZEV) Mandate targets.

Year-to-date, BEVs account for 23.9% of new car registrations, significantly below the 33% market share required under this year's mandate targets. While manufacturers can utilise various regulatory flexibilities, the gap continues to place increasing pressure on vehicle makers to stimulate demand through discounts, incentives and favourable finance offers.

For fleet operators, many of these incentives have helped improve the business case for electrification. However, questions remain around charging infrastructure, vehicle affordability and the pace at which organisations can transition larger fleets to zero-emission vehicles.

Carbon Budget Raises Further Questions

The debate surrounding the pace of electrification has intensified following the publication of the Government's Seventh Carbon Budget, which envisages electric vehicles accounting for 95% of all new car and van sales by 2030.

That ambition exceeds the current ZEV Mandate targets of 80% for cars and 70% for vans by the end of the decade, raising questions about how demand can be accelerated sufficiently to meet those objectives.

For fleet operators, policy certainty remains critical. Vehicle replacement cycles, charging infrastructure investments and long-term procurement strategies all depend on having a clear and achievable roadmap towards decarbonisation.

Industry leaders continue to argue that stronger consumer incentives, investment in charging infrastructure and supportive fiscal policies will be essential if EV adoption is to accelerate at the pace policymakers envision.

Industry Calls for a Realistic Transition

Commenting on the latest figures, SMMT Chief Executive Mike Hawes welcomed the market's performance but warned that greater alignment between regulatory ambition and market reality is needed.

"Britain's car buyers are responding to a market offering more choice than ever, from both new and familiar brands, resulting in a robust May," he said.

"The EV transition is progressing, but consumer uptake still lags behind even today's targets, let alone the ambition set out in the latest Carbon Budget.

"While industry shares the long-term ambition, the pathway to Net Zero must be credible. A review of the transition is now urgent to ensure ambition matches market realities and we have a sustainable path to road transport decarbonisation."●

BetterFleet

Met Police Optimises EV Charging with BetterFleet

The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) has selected BetterFleet as its Charge Management System to underpin its fleet electrification strategy and support progress towards a carbon net-zero fleet by 2030. BetterFleet software will ensure that frontline officers and their fleet teams can reliably plug in and charge EVs across depots and public networks, with automatic prioritisation of critical vehicles, seamless cost allocation to the right cost centres, and clear visibility of which vehicles are charging, ready, or in need of attention.

Expansion of a 24-hour Emergency Response EV Fleet

MPS operates a fleet of approximately 5,500 vehicles and is one of the UK's largest bluelight fleets, with around 30% of vehicles already electric or hybrid. MPS plans to add a further 250 electric or hybrid vehicles and motorcycles in the coming year, increasing demand for both the charging infrastructure and the team overseeing the fleet's 24-hour public safety operations.

As MPS increases the number of charge points for vehicles, BetterFleet streamlines the entire process by allowing fleet managers to operate and monitor new charging locations through a single unified management tool. Built on an enterprise-grade, SOC 2-compliant architecture, BetterFleet provides a secure, resilient, and highly scalable platform designed to meet the cybersecurity and operational demands of large, mission-critical public safety fleets.

"We appreciate the confidence Metropolitan Police has placed in BetterFleet, and we are excited to help them deliver high service levels while making their EV operations simpler," said Daniel Hilson, CEO of BetterFleet. *"We continue to be the software of choice for complex, mission-critical EV fleets, where uptime and on-time performance are crucial."*

Robust Tools for Streamlined Operations

BetterFleet's enterprise-grade charge point management system (CPMS) is designed to reduce the complexity that electrification brings for frontline operations, delivering an easy step-by-step workflow:

- Vehicles plug in and charge reliably
- Authentication works across depots and public networks,and can individually prioritize vehicles
- Energy and charging costs are easily allocated to the right vehicle groups and cost centres;
- Enablement to participate in shared and secure depot charging with other London-based Fleets.

MPS Fleet managers will gain real-time visibility of charging status across the fleet, benefit from automated triage of any exceptions, and use BetterFleet tools to resolve issues quickly so that charging never gets in the way of public safety responses, even as the fleet grows and infrastructure is shared across boroughs.

BetterFleet already manages a significant share of London's Go-Ahead Group electrified bus fleet and supports large Public Sector and transit operators in cities such as Toronto, Boston and Sydney, demonstrating resilience under demanding grid and operational conditions. Building on its support for electrified bus operations across London, BetterFleet's work with the Metropolitan Police further strengthens the city's progress toward its 2030 net-zero ambitions and a fully zero-emission public transport system, while helping manage energy constraints across shared urban infrastructure.

Standards and Telematics

For MPS, BetterFleet represents a simple, secure, and future-ready platform, aligned with global best practices and open standards, that reduces lock-in with a single-charger hardware solution and supports innovations such as ISO 15118 Plug&Charge, AutoCharge, and telematics-driven optimisation.

ABOUT: BetterFleet is a secure SaaS platform that helps transit, government, utility and logistics fleets transition to electric vehicles. Using AI and digital twin technology, it supports vehicle and infrastructure planning, optimises operations and reduces costs. Trusted by more than 200 fleets worldwide, BetterFleet is the new brand name of EVenergi, a global leader in software for zero-emission fleets and infrastructure. For more information vist: **www.betterfleet.com** ●

CUPRA Raval: Bringing **Style** and **Substance** to **Fleet Electrification**

The electric supermini market is becoming increasingly crowded, but the new CUPRA Raval arrives with ambitions that go far beyond simply being another urban EV. Built on the Volkswagen Group's new MEB Entry platform and designed to make electric mobility more accessible, the Raval could become one of the most important fleet-focused EV launches of 2026.

For fleet managerslooking to transition drivers out of petrol and diesel superminis, the Raval combines competitive range, fast charging and a surprisingly practical package in a vehicle measuring just over four metres long.

Compact Size, Serious Fleet Potential

At 4,046mm long, the Raval sits firmly in the B-segment, making it ideally suited to urban and regional fleet duties. However, its dedicated EV architecture allows it to offer packaging advantages that many traditional superminis struggle to match.

The headline figure is a substantial 441-litre boot, which is larger than many vehicles from the class above and should prove particularly attractive for business users who regularly carry equipment, samples or luggage.

Its compact dimensions also make it well suited to city-centre driving, while the elevated driving position and crossover-inspired styling give it broader appeal among company car drivers.

From a fleet perspective, range anxiety remains one of the biggest barriers to EV adoption. CUPRA appears to have addressed this by offering multiple battery and powertrain combinations.

The most relevant fleet models are likely to be the Endurance and Dynamic versions, which offer up to 211hp and a WLTP range of up to 446km (around 277 miles). The more performance-focused VZ model increases power to 226hp while still delivering around 440km of range.

For many user-chooser fleets, this places the Raval firmly within the sweet spot where drivers can comfortably complete most weekly journeys without needing to recharge daily.

A smaller-battery entry model will also join the range, targeting affordability and urban-focused operations.

Fast Charging Helps Minimise Downtime

Charging performance is another area where the Raval looks promising.

The larger battery versions support DC rapid charging at up to 105kW, allowing a 10-80% charge in around 24 minutes. That level of charging performance should make longer business journeys far more manageable and help reduce operational downtime.

For fleets operating salary sacrifice schemes or supporting home charging, the vehicle can also be managed through the My CUPRA app, allowing drivers to monitor charging remotely and pre-condition the cabin before journeys.

Technology Designed Around Modern Drivers

Inside, the Raval adopts the latest generation of Volkswagen Group technology, with connected navigation, wireless smartphone charging, digital displays and a suite of advanced driver assistance systems.

Higher-specification models include Matrix LED headlights, Travel Assist, Predictive Adaptive Cruise Control, intelligent parking assistance and a 360-degree camera system.

These technologies are increasingly valued by fleet drivers, particularly those covering higher annual mileages where driver comfort and convenience can have a direct impact on satisfaction and retention.

Driver Appeal Matters

One area where the Raval could differentiate itself from many rivals is its emphasis on driving enjoyment.

While most affordable EVs focus purely on efficiency, CUPRA has retained the brand's sporting DNA. The flagship VZ model produces 226hp, reaches 62mph in 6.8 seconds and offers features such as an electronic limited-slip differential and adaptive chassis control.

That performance may not be essential for fleet procurement managers, but it can be highly valuable when encouraging employees to adopt EVs through company car schemes.●

"With nearly 280 miles of range and rapid charging capability, the Raval addresses two of the biggest barriers to fleet EV adoption."

"The CUPRA Raval may be one of the first affordable EVs to combine fleet-friendly economics with genuine driver desirability."

To find out more visit: **www.cupraofficial.co.uk**

Toyota bZ4X Touring: More **Space**, More **Capability**, More **Appeal**

Toyota has expanded its battery-electric vehicle range with the introduction of the new bZ4X Touring, a larger and more practical version of the existing bZ4X. Combining increased load capacity, competitive range and enhanced towing capability, the Touring has been designed to appeal to drivers and businesses that need greater versatility from an electric SUV.

The most significant change is the additional space. Toyota has extended the rear of the vehicle, increasing boot capacity to 669 litres – almost 50% more than the standard bZ4X. Fold the rear seats and available load volume rises to 1,718 litres, providing the flexibility needed for everything from work-related equipment to luggage. A wider load opening, power-operated tailgate and convenient rear-seat folding mechanisms further enhance day-to-day practicality.

For fleets whose drivers regularly carry larger items, the bZ4X Touring adds further versatility through standard roof rails capable of supporting up to 80kg and towing capacities of up to 1,500kg on all-wheel-drive models. This makes it a viable option for organisations that require occasional trailer towing without stepping up to a van or pick-up platform.

Range continues to be a key consideration for businesses transitioning to electric vehicles, and Toyota has focused on delivering strong real-world usability. The front-wheel-drive version combines a 74.7kWh battery with a WLTP range of up to 366 miles and efficiency of 4.44 miles per kWh. For many fleet users, that should comfortably cover several days of business travel between charging sessions.

Charging performance has also been prioritised. Thanks to battery pre-conditioning and thermal management systems, the bZ4X Touring can recharge from 10% to 80% in around 28 minutes when connected to a 150kW DC rapid charger. Toyota says the system is designed to maintain consistent charging performance even in temperatures as low as -20°C, helping minimise downtime during colder months.

For fleets operating in rural environments or on challenging terrain, Toyota will offer a powerful all-wheel-drive variant producing 376bhp. Equipped with the brand's X-MODE and Grip Control technologies, the system is designed to

maximise traction on loose, slippery or uneven surfaces. This could prove particularly valuable for utilities, infrastructure providers, construction support teams and field service organisations whose vehicles frequently operate away from surfaced roads.

Battery longevity remains a major consideration for fleet decision-makers, particularly when assessing whole-life costs and residual values. To provide additional reassurance, Toyota's Battery Care Programme guarantees the battery will retain at least 70% of its original capacity for up to 10 years or one million miles, subject to annual battery health checks.

Visually, the Touring adopts a more rugged appearance than the standard bZ4X, featuring revised bumpers, protective skid plates, black alloy wheels and distinctive wheel arch cladding. .

As fleet operators continue to balance sustainability targets with operational demands, the bZ4X Touring appears well placed to fill the gap between traditional passenger SUVs and light commercial vehicles. With its generous load space, long electric range, towing capability and Toyota's reputation for reliability, it could become an attractive option for organisations looking to electrify without compromising on practicality.●

"A 366-mile range and rapid charging capability help make the bZ4X Touring a realistic option for fleet drivers."

To find out more visit: **www.toyota.co.uk**

Kia EV4 Qualifies for **Maximum Government** Electric **Car Grant**

Kia UK has announced that the EV4 is now eligible for the maximum Band 1 Government Electric Car Grant (ECG), increasing the available incentive from £1,500 to £3,750 on selected models.

The enhanced grant applies to the EV4 'Air' Standard Range, EV4 'Air' Long Range and the newly introduced EV4 'Motion' grade, further strengthening the model's appeal for both private buyers and fleet operators looking to accelerate their transition to electric mobility.

The EV4's Band 1 grant eligibility represents a significant milestone for Kia's growing electric vehicle range and supports the wider adoption of zero-emission vehicles across the UK.

New EV4 'Motion' Grade Joins the Range

Kia has also introduced the new EV4 'Motion' trim, positioned between the 'GT-Line' and range-topping 'GT-Line S'.

Available exclusively as a five-door hatchback, the EV4 'Motion' combines a high level of equipment with eligibility for the maximum Electric Car Grant.

Key features include an eight-speaker Harman Kardon premium audio system, cloth and artificial leather upholstery, heated outer rear seats, surround-view monitor, blind-spot view monitor, and an electrically adjustable driver's seat with lumbar support.

Like most EV4 variants, the 'Motion' is powered by a 201bhp front-mounted electric motor paired with an 81.4kWh battery. Externally, it shares the same 17-inch alloy wheels and styling details as the 'Air' model, including body-coloured door mirrors and side sills, black wheel arch cladding and a silver window surround.

Expanding Kia's Electric Vehicle Offering

The announcement means Kia now offers four models eligible for the Government Electric Car Grant: the EV2, EV3, EV4 and PV5 Passenger.

With growing demand for electric vehicles across both retail and fleet sectors, the expanded grant support provides organisations with additional opportunities to accelerate fleet decarbonisation and support wider sustainability objectives.

All qualifying models are available to order now through Kia's UK dealer network, while the PV5 Passenger can be ordered through Kia's dedicated PBV Centres. Kia has indicated that further Electric Car Grant announcements are expected in the coming months, with EV2 Long Range models anticipated to qualify for the maximum Band 1 grant following the EV2 First Edition's inclusion in Band 2 earlier this year.●

To find out more visit: **www.kia.co.uk**

2026 Nissan Ariya: **Smarter**, More **Refined** and **Better Suited** to **Fleet Drivers**

Nissan has updated its Nissan Ariya for 2026, focusing on improved comfort, technology and day-to-day usability rather than a complete redesign.

The refreshed Ariya keeps its sleek coupe-SUV styling but introduces subtle exterior updates including revised alloy wheel designs and new colour options. While the styling changes are modest, the overall vehicle feels more premium and polished than before.

Inside, Nissan has concentrated on making the cabin more practical and comfortable for long-distance driving — something that will appeal to both company car users and fleet operators. A redesigned centre console provides additional storage space, while upgraded wireless charging and improved connectivity help support drivers who spend significant time on the road.

Technology is one of the biggest improvements. The latest NissanConnect system now includes Google Built-In services, allowing direct access to Google Maps, Google Assistant and Google Play without relying on a smartphone connection. Route planning has also been enhanced, automatically incorporating charging stops and preparing the battery for faster rapid charging before arrival.

Ride comfort has been refined through suspension updates designed to reduce vibration and improve motorway cruising. Nissan has also revised its ProPILOT driver assistance systems to deliver smoother and more natural responses in traffic conditions.

Charging performance remains competitive, with DC rapid charging speeds of up to 130kW, while the addition of Vehicle-to-Load (V2L) functionality allows the Ariya to power external equipment directly from the vehicle — a feature that could prove useful for some operational or mobile working environments.

Rather than focusing on outright performance, the Ariya continues to prioritise refinement, cabin quality and ease of use. That positioning works well in the fleet market, where driver comfort, reliability and efficiency often outweigh outright driving dynamics.

For fleet operators and salary sacrifice schemes, the Ariya's combination of strong electric range, premium interior quality and advanced onboard technology makes it an increasingly competitive option in the growing electric SUV sector.

Overall, the 2026 Ariya feels like a smarter and more mature version of Nissan's electric flagship. It may not be the most attention-grabbing EV on the market, but it delivers the kind of comfort, usability and efficiency that many fleets are actively looking for.●

To find out more visit: **www.nissan.co.uk**

Renault Trafic E-Tech Electric: A New **Benchmark** for **Electric Fleet Vans**

Renault has revealed the production version of the all-new Trafic Van E-Tech Electric, and on paper it looks set to be one of the most significant electric van launches of 2026. Having made its UK debut at this year's Commercial Vehicle Show, the new model marks a complete rethink of the long-running Trafic formula, combining a dedicated EV platform, 800V fast charging and software-led technology designed for modern fleet operations.

For fleet operators balancing operational efficiency, driver usability and electrification targets, the Trafic E-Tech Electric looks set to be a compelling proposition.

Built for the Realities of Fleet Operations

While many electric vans are adaptations of existing diesel platforms, the new Trafic has been developed from the ground up as an EV. Built on a dedicated skateboard architecture, Renault has focused on maximising load space while maintaining the compact dimensions that make medium vans so popular with urban fleets.

Load volume reaches up to 5.8m^3, while payload capacity is quoted at up to 1.25 tonnes. A towing capacity of 2 tonnes also ensures the van remains suitable for operators that need to move trailers, equipment or machinery.

Importantly for city-based fleets, the overall height remains below 1.9 metres, allowing access to most underground car parks and height-restricted locations. A tight 10.3-metre turning circle should further improve manoeuvrability in congested urban environments.

Fast Charging Addresses Operational Concerns

Range anxiety may no longer be the biggest barrier to electric van adoption, but vehicle downtime remains a key consideration for fleet managers.

Renault has addressed this with an 800V electrical architecture, a feature rarely seen in the medium van sector and one that promises significant reductions in charging downtime. The system enables charging from 15% to 80% in around 20 minutes on a suitable DC rapid charger, recovering up to 260km of driving range during a short break.

Two battery options will be offered. The long-range NMC battery delivers a claimed WLTP range of up to 450km, making it suitable for regional and mixed-use operations. A lower-cost LFP battery, arriving later, offers up to 350km of range and avoids the use of cobalt and nickel, potentially appealing to fleets focused on sustainability and total cost of ownership.

For many operators, these figures could eliminate the need for mid-shift charging altogether.

The First Renault Software Defined Vehicle

Beyond the impressive charging performance, the Trafic's software-defined architecture could prove equally significant for fleet operators.

The Trafic E-Tech Electric becomes Renault's first Software Defined Vehicle (SDV), allowing many vehicle functions to be updated and improved remotely throughout its lifecycle. Rather than

becoming technologically outdated after a few years, the van can receive new features, performance enhancements and reliability improvements via software updates.

For fleets, this has the potential to reduce workshop visits, improve uptime and help keep vehicles operating at peak efficiency for longer.

The OpenR infotainment system features a 12-inch central touchscreen with navigation specifically designed for commercial vehicles. Route planning considers vehicle dimensions, payload requirements and charging needs, helping drivers avoid unsuitable roads while optimising charging stops.

Google built-in functionality adds further convenience and connectivity.

A Mobile Power Source

Renault has also equipped the Trafic E-Tech Electric with Vehicle-to-Load (V2L) and Vehicle-to-Grid (V2G) functionality.

For utility, construction and maintenance fleets, V2L could prove particularly valuable, allowing tools and equipment to be powered directly from the vehicle's battery pack without the need for separate generators. Meanwhile, V2G capability may provide opportunities for organisations looking to integrate vehicles into wider energy management strategies and potentially reduce energy costs.

Conversion Potential Matters

Many electric van launches focus solely on panel van applications, but Renault is clearly targeting specialist fleet sectors too.

The Trafic E-Tech Electric will be available in chassis variants suitable for tippers, flatbeds, box bodies and other conversions. Production of many common conversions will take place directly at Renault's Sandouville facility in France, supported by Qstomize, Renault's dedicated conversion subsidiary.

For more specialist requirements, operators can access Renault's network of over 300 approved bodybuilders.

For fleets requiring specialist vehicles, this factory-backed conversion strategy could reduce lead times, simplify procurement and provide greater confidence in vehicle quality and warranty support.

In Summary

The electric van market is becoming increasingly competitive, but the new Renault Trafic Van E-Tech Electric appears to bring several genuinely fleet-focused innovations rather than simply larger batteries and longer range figures.

Its combination of a dedicated EV platform, 800V charging technology, strong payload credentials and software-defined architecture positions it among the most technologically advanced medium electric vans currently entering the market.

While pricing and final UK specifications remain to be confirmed, Renault appears to have developed a van that addresses many of the practical concerns fleets have around electrification. If the real-world performance matches the headline figures, the Trafic E-Tech Electric could become one of the standout electric LCV launches of 2026.●

"Renault has designed the Trafic E-Tech Electric around the realities of fleet operations, prioritising uptime, payload, charging speed and operational flexibility."

To find out more visit:. **https://business.renault.co.uk/**

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