



ESSENTIAL FLEET MANAGER *Magazine*

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

ISSUE 5
2026



Inside this issue
**Keeping Fleets
Operational and Moving**

EFG
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Essential Fleet Manager Magazine

ISSUE 5 (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

03 | 04 INDUSTRY NEWS

Electric Vehicle Excise Duty (eVED): Mileage-Based Tax from April 2028

05 OPERATIONAL ADVICE

Operator Compliance: Is Earned Recognition the Next Step?

06 | 07 SUPPLIER INSIGHT

Venson: Avoiding the Hidden Costs in Fleet Procurement

08 | 12 OPERATIONAL ADVICE

Keeping Fleets Moving: Why Vehicle Uptime Depends on More Than Just Good Maintenance

13 SUPPLIER NEWS

Northstar Vehicle Management Secures a Major Nationwide Contract

14 | 16 SUPPLIER INSIGHT

Beyond Racking: How bott is Evolving into a Complete Vehicle Conversion Partner

17 ASSOCIATION NEWS

AFP: Shared Fault Data Helps Fleets Hold Manufacturers to Account

SPECIAL FEATURE: VEHICLE HIRE

18 | 20 Rethinking Fleet Provision

21 Framework Focus: ESPO Launches New Specialist Vehicle Contract Hire and Leasing Agreement

22 | 23 Europcar: The Right Partner for the Essential Transition to Sustainable Fleets

24 | 25 Arval: Building a More Flexible Fleet

26 | 27 Switch: Flexible Fleet Solutions for Operational Resilience

28 | 29 The Fleet Brief: Hiring a Vehicle? Insurance Questions Every Fleet Manager Should Ask

30 | 31 Legal Insight: CE Transport Law – Hired Vehicle. Same Legal Duties! The Operator Is Still Accountable

32 FLEET VEHICLE TRIAL

How bott is Helping the Water Industry Master the Challenges of Electrification

33 | 35 FLEET VEHICLE FOCUS

Farizon Brings Fresh Competition to the Electric Van Market

36 | 37 OPERATIONAL ADVICE

Managing Requests to Take Fleet Vehicles Abroad

ADAS Doesn't Prevent Collisions. Drivers Do.

40 | 41 SUPPLIER NEWS

Modul-System to Trial AI-Powered 'Modul Workspace Intelligence' with SGN

42 | 52 SECTOR NEWS

In Brief

BYD Supports St John Ambulance Co-Responder Pilot in Norfolk
Oxfordshire Introduces First Dual Fuel Hydrogen Highways Maintenance Vehicle

NG Bailey Accelerates Fleet Transformation with Connected Technology

UK Power Networks: Free Digital Tool Unveils Powerful New Insights to Accelerate EV Rollout

Specialist Vehicles Strengthen Front-Line Fire and Rescue Operations

58 | 59 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Essential Fleet Group Launches Professional Development Guide

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ELECTRIC VEHICLE EXCISE DUTY (eVED)

MILEAGE-BASED TAX FROM APRIL 2028



FAIR CONTRIBUTION

Ensuring EV drivers continue to pay their share for our roads.



MILEAGE-BASED CHARGING

Pay based on the miles you drive, not the fuel you use.



ESTIMATE, PAY, RECONCILE

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CHARGING
THE FUTURE



IMPLEMENTATION DATE

1 APRIL 2028

Are you ready?

The Government has confirmed further details of the new Electric Vehicle Excise Duty (eVED), a mileage-based charging system that will apply to electric cars and plug-in hybrid cars from 1 April 2028. The new system is intended to ensure electric vehicle drivers continue to contribute towards the upkeep of the road network as fuel duty revenues decline with the transition away from petrol and diesel vehicles.

While implementation remains almost two years away, the policy has important implications for fleet operators, company car fleets, leasing providers and rental businesses. Understanding how the system will work now will help organisations prepare for changes to budgeting, vehicle selection and fleet administration.

Why is eVED Being Introduced?

Fuel duty has traditionally generated billions of pounds in revenue for the Government. However, as more organisations and private motorists switch to electric vehicles, receipts from fuel duty are expected to

reduce significantly.

The Government says eVED will replace part of this lost revenue by introducing a charge based on the number of miles an electric or plug-in hybrid car travels, rather than the amount of fuel it consumes. Unlike conventional Vehicle Excise Duty, the amount paid will vary according to annual mileage.

How Will the System Work?

Rather than paying a fixed annual charge, motorists will estimate how many miles they expect to drive during the coming tax year.

Drivers will then either:

- pay the amount upfront, or
- spread payments throughout the year.

At the end of the tax period, the vehicle's odometer reading will be submitted and compared against the original estimate. Any difference between estimated and actual mileage will be reconciled, with motorists paying additional tax if they have exceeded their estimate or receiving a credit where appropriate. Mileage reporting will be integrated into existing DVLA vehicle taxation processes.

What Does This Mean for Fleet Operators?

For organisations operating company cars or employee vehicle fleets, eVED introduces an additional operational consideration.

Fleet managers will need processes to:

- forecast annual mileage accurately
- monitor mileage throughout the year
- manage budget adjustments where mileage differs from estimates
- ensure mileage reporting is completed correctly.

Many larger organisations already collect detailed mileage data through telematics, fleet management systems or fuel card reporting, meaning the administrative impact may be relatively limited.

For fleets without comprehensive mileage monitoring, however, eVED could increase the importance of accurate journey recording and vehicle utilisation reporting.

Leasing and Rental Businesses Receive Special Arrangements

Recognising the complexity of managing thousands of vehicles across multiple customers, the Government has confirmed that leasing and rental companies will be able to access special administrative arrangements.

"For fleet operators, accurate mileage data will become more than an operational tool — it will become a financial necessity."



Rather than requiring individual mileage estimates for every vehicle user, businesses will be able to estimate mileage centrally. The Government has confirmed it will continue working with the leasing and rental sector ahead of implementation to develop these arrangements.

This should help minimise administrative burdens for organisations operating large leased or rental fleets.

Data Will Become Even More Important

Although many fleet operators already use telematics to improve efficiency, the introduction of mileage-based taxation places even greater importance on accurate vehicle data.

Reliable mileage information will support:

- budgeting
- whole-life cost calculations
- replacement planning
- vehicle allocation
- taxation compliance.

For organisations already investing in connected fleet technologies, eVED further strengthens the business case for maintaining accurate, real-time fleet information.

Will It Affect Electric Vehicle Adoption?

The Government acknowledges that introducing mileage-based taxation could have a modest impact on future electric vehicle uptake.

The Office for Budget Responsibility estimates the wider package of measures introduced alongside eVED could reduce EV sales by around 120,000 vehicles between 2025/26 and 2030/31. However, this represents only around 2% of expected EV sales over that period,

and the Government maintains that the wider transition to zero-emission vehicles will continue.

For fleet operators, purchasing decisions are likely to continue being driven primarily by operational suitability, infrastructure availability, whole-life costs and corporate sustainability objectives rather than taxation alone.

Preparing for 2028

Although implementation does not begin until April 2028, fleet operators should use the intervening period to review how vehicle mileage is currently monitored and reported.

Organisations may wish to consider:

- whether existing systems provide sufficiently accurate mileage data
- how annual mileage forecasts are produced
- the impact of eVED on whole-life vehicle costs

David Bushnell, Director of Consultancy and Strategy at Fleet Operations commented:

"The government's decision to introduce specific eVED arrangements for fleets is a welcome acknowledgement that a system designed around individual motorists would not work for businesses operating vehicles at scale."

"Allowing fleets to provide central mileage estimates, make aggregate payments and settle liabilities before defleeting should reduce some of the administrative burden."

"The proposed API and web interface are also sensible, provided they are thoroughly tested and supported by clear guidance ahead of April 2028."

"These changes, however, address the mechanics of the tax rather than its wider impact. At 3p per mile, a fully electric car covering 20,000 miles a year would attract an annual charge of £600, which fleets will need to build into whole-life cost calculations."

"The cost will also be felt by employees who have moved from privately owned cars into electric vehicles through salary sacrifice schemes, including many public-sector workers. While we recognise the principle that those who drive more should contribute more, the timing risks causing some employees considering salary sacrifice to delay making the switch."

"This could create a pause in EV uptake at a time manufacturers face increasingly demanding ZEV mandate targets. Drivers and fleets must also understand that the 3p rate will not remain fixed, with increases in line with CPI planned from 2029-30."

"The government must now work closely with the fleet industry to ensure eVED does not create unnecessary friction or weaken the business case for electrification."

Gurjeet Grewal, CEO of Octopus Electric Vehicles, comments:

"Cutting VAT on electricity bills makes one of the UK's cheapest forms of transport even more affordable. Drivers will now save close to £900 a year by charging an EV at home instead of filling up a petrol car - that's enough to cover an annual insurance bill for many drivers."

"With electric cars now reaching price parity across more models – and the UK's cheapest new car, the Dacia Spring, now electric – the financial case for going electric has never been stronger." ●



Operator Compliance: Is Earned Recognition the Next Step?

As compliance requirements continue to evolve and fleet management becomes increasingly data driven, more operators are exploring the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency's (DVSA) Earned Recognition scheme. Designed to recognise organisations that can consistently demonstrate high standards of compliance, the scheme uses operational data to provide the DVSA with ongoing assurance that an operator is effectively managing its legal responsibilities.

For fleet operators, compliance has never been more important. Vehicle safety, preventative maintenance, driver management and accurate record keeping all play a vital role in protecting an operator's licence, reducing operational risk and ensuring vehicles remain safe and available for service.

What Is DVSA Earned Recognition?

DVSA Earned Recognition is a voluntary accreditation scheme for HGV and PSV operators that can demonstrate robust systems for managing compliance. Rather than relying primarily on roadside inspections and investigations, the scheme uses compliance data generated by an operator's own fleet management systems to provide the DVSA with ongoing assurance that legal responsibilities are being met.

Operators share key performance information electronically, enabling the DVSA to monitor standards continuously rather than relying solely on physical inspections. The scheme does not remove an operator's legal obligations or exempt vehicles from enforcement where safety concerns exist. Instead, it recognises organisations that can consistently demonstrate effective compliance management.

How Does It Work?

Before joining the scheme, operators must successfully complete an independent audit by a DVSA-approved audit provider. This assesses whether appropriate systems, procedures and controls are in place to manage compliance effectively.

Accredited operators then submit compliance data electronically on an ongoing basis. The DVSA monitors a range of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), including vehicle safety inspections, preventative maintenance, MOT performance, drivers' hours and tachograph compliance, as well as defect reporting and rectification.

If performance falls below the required standard, operators are expected to investigate the cause and take corrective action. Persistent failures can ultimately result in accreditation being withdrawn.

What Are The Benefits?

One of the most recognised benefits is a reduced likelihood of compliant vehicles being selected for routine roadside inspections. For organisations operating large fleets, this can help reduce unnecessary disruption and improve vehicle availability.

However, many accredited operators believe the greatest value comes from strengthening their own compliance processes.

Preparing for accreditation encourages organisations to review maintenance planning, driver management, record keeping and governance. The process often identifies opportunities to improve consistency, strengthen internal controls and address potential compliance issues before they become regulatory problems.

Data Is Driving Compliance

Modern fleet management increasingly depends on reliable operational data. Maintenance software, telematics systems, workshop management platforms and digital defect reporting all provide valuable information that helps operators monitor compliance and identify emerging risks.

Earned Recognition builds on this approach by encouraging operators to use that data proactively. Rather than waiting for problems to be identified during a roadside inspection or audit, fleet operators are expected to monitor performance continuously, ensuring inspections are completed on time, defects are rectified promptly and compliance issues are addressed before they escalate.

Could It Benefit Essential Service Fleets?

Many essential service fleets already have mature compliance systems, supported by digital fleet management software, telematics and structured maintenance programmes. As a result, many of the processes required for DVSA Earned Recognition may already be in place.

Further Information

Further information on the scheme, including eligibility, audit requirements and the application process, is available on the official DVSA guidance page: [DVSA Earned Recognition for Vehicle Operators](#). ●

Avoiding the hidden costs in fleet procurement

Simon Staton, Client Management Director, Venson Automotive Solutions explains why monitoring matters in managing supplier performance

In life, you generally get what you pay for and fleet procurement is no exception. Whether tendering for contract hire or fleet management, fleet operators are making a significant financial commitment, meaning the stakes are high when selecting a new partner. So, choosing the right supplier is about far more than comparing prices.

A successful tender process starts with clearly defining business requirements and bringing together the right stakeholders, from fleet, finance and HR to legal and procurement. While robust governance is essential, however, nothing replaces practical fleet experience when it comes to identifying the nitty-gritty of contractual details that can have a big impact on long-term costs and operational performance.

Unlike buying office equipment, procuring fleet services isn't a straightforward commodity purchase. A contract covers far more than the vehicles themselves, from maintenance and repairs to vehicle downtime and end of contract charges. In an environment where cost control is paramount, these elements can quickly become expensive. That's why securing the right agreement from the outset, and actively managing supplier performance throughout the contract, is just as important as negotiating the initial price.

Keeping a Rein on Charges

For example, what seemed like a competitive contract with a vehicle supplier can become more expensive when it comes to end of contract charges.

Mileage and damage charges, for instance are an easy way for vehicle suppliers to levy significant fees so asking for examples up front of how it is managed is key. When negotiating a contract, fleet operators should understand how damage is assessed and repaired. Transparent repair processes and adherence to recognised fair wear and tear standards will help ensure best value.

Similarly early termination charges can prove to be a lucrative revenue

earner for some suppliers if not fully understood, tightly negotiated and then monitored throughout the duration of the supplier contract.

Managing Downtime

Unfortunately, vehicles will break down, and downtime is an inevitable part of fleet management. The knock-on effects on business efficiency can be significant, and the financial and reputational costs hard to bear, especially when that downtime is unscheduled.

Understanding how the supplier will manage and report on downtime are key. Ask the question 'at what point does downtime start being measured', so that when comparing suppliers, it is on a like for like basis.

What Does 'With Maintenance' Mean?

Semantics are important when it comes to defining maintenance in a contract. For example, contract hire with maintenance at its most minimal involves the supply of a vehicle and drivers booking their own car or van in for a service, which takes time.

However, contract hire with maintenance can be much more, so it is critical to define your requirements so that there is a clear understanding on both sides of what 'with maintenance' looks like. For example, does it include service scheduling, service due reminders and vehicle collection and delivery?

Poor Customer Service Costs

Poor customer service carries a real cost. Every minute that the fleet team or drivers spend waiting on hold or chasing updates is time lost to more productive work.

While these costs may seem small in isolation, when multiplied across hundreds of vehicles and thousands of interactions over the life of a fleet contract, they can have a significant impact on the total cost of fleet operations.

Negotiating Service Level Agreements and ensuring there is a dedicated account management team should be key components of a contract.



Simon Staton, Client Management Director, Venson Automotive Solutions

Weighing Up SMR Costs

The debate around the cost of using a franchise dealer versus an independent garage is almost as old as the fleet industry itself.

While independent garages often offer lower labour rates than franchised dealers, labour cost alone should not determine where vehicles are serviced.

Fleet operators should consider the total cost of repair, including vehicle downtime, workshop opening hours, parts quality, warranty implications and operational disruption. In many cases, a higher labour rate may be offset by faster turnaround times and reduced impact on fleet operations.

There is so much for businesses to consider when taking on a new provider, it is always worth remembering that the procurement team is negotiating a living contract.

By actively monitoring performance during the length of the contract fleet operators will help minimise additional costs, build supplier relationships that add real value to their organisation and importantly achieve their operational and financial objectives.





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Keeping Fleets Moving

Why Vehicle Uptime Depends on More Than Just Good Maintenance

For fleet operators, vehicle availability is a critical indicator of operational success. Whether managing twenty vehicles or thousands, the sudden removal of any vehicle can disrupt service, increase costs and place additional pressure on drivers and operational teams. Ensuring vehicles remain roadworthy goes far beyond meeting legal obligations; it is fundamental to maintaining productivity, controlling costs and delivering essential services reliably.

Most importantly, it plays a key role in managing operational risk. While fleet operators are legally required to keep vehicles safe and roadworthy, many recognise that exceeding the minimum legal standard represents best practice and ultimately delivers better operational outcomes.

Preventing Problems Before They Occur

While unexpected breakdowns can never be eliminated entirely, many vehicle-off-road incidents are preventable through effective maintenance planning and proactive fleet management.

Routine servicing, scheduled inspections and preventative maintenance programmes help identify wear before it develops into more serious mechanical failures. Components such as tyres,

brakes, suspension and steering systems all deteriorate gradually, making regular inspections essential to maintaining reliability and safety.

In reality, effective vehicle maintenance is based on planning rather than reacting. Predictive maintenance, supported by regular inspections and vehicle performance data, enables fleet managers to identify potential issues before they result in costly failures or unnecessary vehicle downtime.

By monitoring vehicle condition, service schedules and utilisation, fleet managers can minimise unexpected downtime, extend vehicle life and ensure compliance with manufacturer recommendations and legislative requirements. Preventative maintenance not only improves reliability but also reduces the total cost of ownership by avoiding expensive repairs and extending vehicle lifespan. Ultimately, well-maintained vehicles are far less likely to suffer unexpected breakdowns.

The Cost of Vehicle Downtime

When a vehicle is unavailable, the cost extends well beyond the repair itself.

Missed appointments, delayed projects, overtime payments, replacement vehicle hire, customer dissatisfaction and reduced workforce productivity can quickly multiply the financial impact of what may initially appear to be a relatively minor

mechanical issue.

For organisations delivering essential services, the consequences can be even greater. Delays in housing repairs, postponed highway maintenance or slower utility response times can create operational challenges throughout the organisation while affecting the services delivered to customers and communities. Reducing vehicle downtime is therefore more than an operational objective; it is a business priority.

Compliance Remains Fundamental

Maintaining roadworthy vehicles is not only good practice; it is a legal responsibility.

Fleet operators have a duty to ensure vehicles are safe, properly maintained and fit for purpose. Depending on vehicle type and operation, this may include preventative maintenance inspections, MOT testing, daily walk-round checks, defect reporting and, where applicable, compliance with Operator Licence requirements.

Technology is making compliance easier to manage. Digital inspection systems, maintenance management software and telematics now provide fleet managers with greater visibility of vehicle condition, enabling defects to be reported, monitored and resolved more efficiently.

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Just as importantly, fleet operators need an auditable record demonstrating that defects have been identified, assessed and repaired within appropriate timescales. In the event of an investigation or audit, documented evidence is every bit as important as the maintenance itself.

However, technology should support good fleet management rather than replace it. Clear processes, driver engagement and robust maintenance planning remain essential.

Drivers Are the First Line of Defence

Drivers are often the first people to identify developing faults before they become serious mechanical failures.

Daily walk-round inspections, defect reporting and good communication with workshop teams allow issues to be rectified before they affect vehicle availability or compromise safety.

Increasingly, digital inspection apps enable drivers to complete checks using smartphones or tablets, providing instant reporting, photographic evidence and auditable records that help fleet managers monitor vehicle condition in real time.

Ultimately, even the best maintenance programme relies on drivers carrying out thorough daily inspections and reporting defects promptly.

Recovery Should Be Part of the Plan

Even the best-maintained fleets occasionally experience breakdowns, collisions or other unexpected incidents.

When they do, the speed and quality of the recovery response can significantly influence how quickly normal operations resume.

Professional recovery providers offer far

more than vehicle transportation. Many provide roadside repairs, nationwide coverage, specialist commercial vehicle recovery, replacement vehicle coordination and incident management, helping minimise disruption and reduce vehicle downtime.

For fleet managers, having a recovery partner already in place provides reassurance that support is available whenever it is needed rather than trying to source assistance during an emergency.

The Value of Specialist Partners

Few organisations possess all the expertise needed to manage every aspect of modern fleet operations internally.

As vehicle technology becomes increasingly sophisticated and compliance requirements continue

to evolve, many fleets work alongside specialist partners who provide expertise in areas such as vehicle maintenance, accident management, fleet management software, compliance support, telematics and recovery services.

Rather than replacing the role of the fleet manager, specialist partners should complement it by providing additional expertise, technical knowledge and operational capacity that would often be difficult or uneconomical to maintain in-house.

The strongest partnerships extend beyond simply providing services. Good suppliers understand an organisation's operational requirements, recommend improvements, identify efficiencies and support long-term fleet planning.

Whether maintaining specialist commercial vehicles, coordinating nationwide servicing or providing strategic fleet management advice, experienced partners become an extension of the fleet team rather than simply another contractor.

Data Is Driving Better Decisions

One of the biggest changes in fleet management over recent years has been the increasing use of operational data.

Maintenance records, telematics, defect reporting, utilisation data and workshop information all provide valuable insight into vehicle performance and reliability. Analysing this information allows fleet managers to identify recurring faults, monitor vehicle availability, improve maintenance scheduling and make better-informed replacement decisions.



Fleet Maintenance, Built Around the Way Fleet Managers Work

For most fleet managers, the vehicle work itself isn't the hard part — it's coordinating it around drivers, schedules and budgets. Every MOT, service or repair carries a hidden cost: time spent booking, comparing quotes, chasing garages and waiting for vehicles to come back. What should be routine becomes an administrative burden.

Fixter is built on one principle: maintenance should fit around your operation, not the other way around.

Instead of vehicles going to garages, Fixter collects and delivers — from the office, depot, worksite or driver's home — keeping drivers productive and disruption low. Behind the scenes, a nationwide network of 300+ vetted independent garages gives fleets consistent UK coverage, backed by upfront pricing and a single point of contact throughout.

FOR FLEET MANAGERS



Less admin spent
booking and chasing



Reduced downtime
through collection
& delivery



Cost certainty with
transparent pricing



One consistent
process, wherever
vehicles are based



Case study: Indie Campers

One of the UK's largest motorhome rental businesses, Indie Campers needed a maintenance process that scaled across multiple locations following its acquisition of Bunk Campers. Using Fixter's nationwide network and managed collection and delivery, the company now runs routine maintenance through a single process — wherever its vehicles are based — while keeping them available for customers.

“Fixter has completely streamlined our vehicle maintenance. Having a single point of contact across all our sites saves us time, keeps costs competitive, and removes the hassle of managing local garages. Plus, their collection and delivery service frees up our depot managers to focus on keeping our operations running smoothly”

— IVAN TEIXERIA & LUIS CANARIAS
(INDIE CAMPERS)

CONTACT FIXTER

✉ fleets@fixter.co.uk

☎ 0330 808 9527



Successful fleet management is achieved through partnership, communication and shared responsibility.

Analysing this information allows fleet managers to identify recurring faults, monitor vehicle availability, improve maintenance scheduling and make better-informed replacement decisions. Increasingly, artificial intelligence and predictive analytics are also helping fleet managers identify emerging trends, forecast maintenance requirements and prioritise interventions before failures occur.

Working with suppliers capable of providing meaningful reporting and performance data enables organisations to move from reactive maintenance towards continuous improvement.

A Collaborative Approach

Successful fleet management is rarely achieved in isolation.

Drivers, workshop teams, maintenance providers, recovery specialists, software suppliers and fleet managers all contribute to keeping vehicles safe, compliant and available for service.

Strong communication between these stakeholders helps ensure defects are identified early, repairs are completed promptly and vehicles return to service as quickly as possible.

Ultimately, everyone shares the same objective: keeping vehicles operating

safely and efficiently while minimising disruption to frontline operations.

Keeping Essential Services Moving

Fleet management has become increasingly complex, with organisations balancing operational demands, compliance responsibilities, budget pressures and changing vehicle technologies.

Maintaining vehicle uptime requires far more than scheduled servicing alone. It depends upon preventative maintenance, effective compliance processes, rapid recovery arrangements and strong partnerships with specialist suppliers capable of supporting fleet operations throughout the vehicle lifecycle.

As fleets continue to evolve, the organisations achieving the highest levels of vehicle availability are rarely those with the largest maintenance teams or the biggest budgets. More often, they are those that combine robust maintenance planning, effective compliance processes, intelligent use of data and strong partnerships with trusted suppliers.

By adopting this collaborative approach, fleet operators can improve reliability, minimise downtime and ensure vehicles remain available to deliver the essential services that communities depend upon every day.

Five Questions to Ask Your Fleet Partners

Whether you're reviewing an existing supplier or appointing a new one, asking the right questions can help ensure you're selecting a partner capable of supporting your operational objectives.

1 How will you help minimise vehicle downtime?

Look beyond repair times. Ask about preventative maintenance, response times, vehicle availability and how they help keep vehicles operational.

2 What reporting and management information do you provide?

Reliable data should help identify recurring faults, monitor vehicle performance and support better fleet planning.

3 Can you support our fleet wherever it operates?

If your organisation works across multiple locations, ensure the supplier has the geographical coverage and capacity to provide consistent support.

4 How do you support compliance?

Ask what systems are in place to help manage inspections, maintenance records, defect reporting and audit trails, ensuring you remain compliant with your legal responsibilities.

5 How will you help improve fleet performance over time?

The best suppliers do more than deliver a service. They should work with you to identify efficiencies, reduce downtime, improve utilisation and support your long-term fleet strategy. ●



Northstar Vehicle Management Secures Major Nationwide Contract Weeks After Launch

A Gateshead fleet management specialist with nearly three decades of experience in the commercial vehicle sector has launched a new business providing end-to-end fleet management services, having secured a major nationwide contract within weeks of opening.

Northstar Vehicle Management, founded by Gavin Hewitt and based at Blaydon Business Centre, has been appointed by Loomis UK to manage its nationwide fleet of 450 armoured vehicles. Through a phased programme towards full fleet management responsibility, Northstar Vehicle Management will provide comprehensive support across maintenance, tyres, security systems and compliance.

Gavin brings more than 27 years of industry experience to the new venture. He began his career in 1997 with Bell Truck and Van in Birtley as a Mercedes-Benz commercial vehicle Service Advisor before progressing through a series of senior management positions, including Aftersales Director and Truck Dealer Principal. He later joined Northside Truck and Van as Aftersales Director before moving into fleet management with MaxAssist.

Having spent his career supporting fleet operators from the supplier side of the industry, Gavin says he is now taking almost three decades of experience to "the customer side" of the industry.

Gavin said: "After serving customers for the past 27 years, I saw a real gap in the marketplace. A lot of the larger fleet management companies have lost that personal touch. Everything is hidden behind video calls and automated systems.

"At Northstar Vehicle Management we put the customer at the heart of everything through proper customer service, face-to-face communication and hands-on support, while also using bespoke software and AI technology to improve the whole process.



Picture: The Bigger Picture Agency

"Our role is to become an extension of the customer's fleet team, coordinating maintenance and repairs, managing compliance, providing operational oversight and using telematics and performance data to help reduce downtime and improve efficiency. We give operators a single point of contact and complete visibility across their fleet."

"I set myself a target of managing 1,000 vehicles within the first 12 months, so securing a contract of this size so early on is incredibly rewarding," Gavin added. "It's a nationwide contract, from the north of Scotland to the south coast, and we'll be making sure those vehicles are compliant, roadworthy and operating safely."

"Our focus isn't simply on arranging vehicle repairs. It's about understanding each customer's operation, helping them stay compliant, keeping vehicles on the road and providing the information they need to make better fleet decisions. Every hour a vehicle is off the road impacts the organisation it supports, so minimising downtime is always our priority."

A spokesperson for Loomis UK said: "Loomis UK selected Northstar Vehicle Management as its fleet management provider due to its industry expertise and extensive knowledge of dealer networks. Their technology-driven, customer-centric approach and structured processes will help ensure our fleet remains safe, compliant and operationally effective across the UK."

Northstar Vehicle Management offers a comprehensive range of fleet support services, including centralised fleet management, proactive maintenance scheduling, repair coordination,

compliance management, digital servicing records, telematics solutions, supplier management and fleet performance reporting, helping organisations maintain operational control while reducing administrative burden.

Drawing on extensive experience gained across commercial vehicle dealerships, aftersales management and independent fleet management, Gavin has built Northstar Vehicle Management around the principles of transparency, responsiveness and customer service. Recognising that every fleet operates differently, the company works closely with customers to tailor its services to their individual operational requirements, providing a proactive approach that helps maximise vehicle uptime, improve compliance and deliver complete visibility across fleet operations.

With systems and processes designed to support fleets of any size, Northstar Vehicle Management plans to continue expanding its North East operation as new contracts are secured, creating further opportunities for local talent.

"We're proud to be based in Gateshead and want to keep that North East heritage as we grow," Gavin said. "There's a huge amount of talent in this region and we want to create opportunities locally."

Looking to the future of the industry, Gavin believes electric commercial vehicles will play a major role. **He said:** "The whole sector is changing rapidly towards EV technology, particularly electric trucks, and that's an area we're very interested in developing expertise in." ●

For further information about Northstar Vehicle Management, visit northstarvm.co.uk, email info@northstarvm.co.uk or call 0191 656 9247



Beyond Van Racking

How bott is Evolving into a **Complete Vehicle Conversion Partner**

Vehicle conversions have become significantly more complex. Fleet operators are balancing tighter compliance requirements, new vehicle technologies, decarbonisation strategies and increasing operational pressures, all while striving to maximise vehicle uptime and productivity. As expectations evolve, organisations are increasingly looking beyond individual products, seeking partners capable of understanding their operations, delivering consistent quality and taking responsibility for complete vehicle conversion programmes.

Built on more than 90 years of engineering expertise and strengthened by the integration of Van Guard Accessories, bott has evolved beyond its traditional reputation as a vehicle racking manufacturer. Today, the business offers a comprehensive vehicle conversion proposition built around three guiding principles: Designed Around Your World, Operational Excellence Delivered at Scale and End-to-End, Without Exception.

In the first of a four-part editorial series, Essential Fleet Manager explores how these principles are shaping bott's approach to supporting modern fleet operators.

Fleet Conversions Have Changed

The days when a vehicle conversion simply meant installing shelving or

fitting roof bars are long gone. Today's fleet vehicles often leave the production line requiring specialist storage systems, electrical installations, safety equipment, lighting, security products, telematics, livery and increasingly sophisticated technology, all integrated into a single, reliable solution.

At the same time, fleet operators face growing pressure to improve productivity, reduce whole-life costs and maximise vehicle availability, while ensuring every vehicle remains safe, compliant and fit for purpose.

These changing demands are reshaping expectations of suppliers. Increasingly, fleet operators are looking beyond individual products, seeking partners capable of understanding how their vehicles are used, coordinating multiple elements of the conversion process and taking ownership of the finished result.

It is a shift that has fundamentally influenced bott's own evolution.

While the company remains recognised as one of Europe's leading vehicle conversion specialists, its focus today extends far beyond the manufacture of vehicle racking. Through continued investment, engineering innovation and the integration of Van Guard Accessories, bott has expanded both its capabilities and the breadth of support it provides to fleet operators.



Nick Smith, Chief Executive Officer (UK), Bott Ltd.

For Nick Smith, CEO of bott Ltd, that evolution reflects the changing needs of customers rather than a change in direction.

"Fleet operators are under increasing pressure to be both financially and operationally efficient. Our role is to help customers meet those challenges by continually developing both our engineering capability and the way we deliver complete vehicle conversion programmes."

Rather than viewing vehicle conversions as individual products or one-off projects, bott increasingly sees its role as a long-term partner, working with customers to deliver solutions that improve operational efficiency throughout the life of the vehicle.

bott Today

The acquisition of Van Guard Accessories represents one of the most significant developments in bott's recent history. More than simply expanding its product portfolio, it has strengthened the company's ability to provide customers with a broader range of vehicle conversion solutions through a single supplier relationship.

For fleet operators, particularly those managing large or geographically dispersed fleets, that consolidation offers practical benefits. Instead of coordinating multiple suppliers across different elements of a conversion programme, organisations can work with a single partner responsible for delivering an integrated solution.

Nick believes that single point of responsibility is becoming increasingly important.

"Van Guard Accessories has been a key part of developing an unrivalled one-stop shop, which is so important for fleet operators looking for a single point of supply and, most importantly, a single point of responsibility."

The integration has also brought together two businesses with complementary strengths, combining decades of engineering expertise with an expanded regional network and wider customer base.



Kim Smith (right), UK Head of Direct and Fleet Sales, is leading the growth of bott's comprehensive fleet solutions, now enhanced through the addition of Van Guard.

"By integrating the Van Guard network of partners and customers with bott, we've had the opportunity to provide our expertise to a much wider range of customers, with everybody benefitting from our decades of experience and innovation."

The result is an organisation capable of supporting everything from small regional fleets requiring bespoke vehicle conversions to national fleet programmes involving hundreds or even thousands of vehicles.

Nick says the company is continuing to strengthen its regional capability through the expansion of bott's converter partner network and the development of regional conversion hubs, beginning with its new facility in Exeter.

"The expansion of our converter partner network and regional conversion hubs, starting with our new facility in Exeter, means we're able to support customers more efficiently wherever they operate, providing local expertise backed by consistent national standards."

For customers, that means vehicle conversion expertise is available closer to where their fleets operate, while larger national organisations benefit from consistent regional delivery, all backed by a single point of responsibility.

Yet despite that significant expansion, Nick believes the company's underlying philosophy has remained remarkably consistent.

Rather than beginning with products, bott starts by understanding how customers operate, the challenges they face and what success looks like within their organisation. Those conversations shape every subsequent decision, from engineering design and manufacturing through to installation, delivery and long-term support.

This approach is built around three principles that provide the framework for every bott conversion programme.

bott's Ashby-de-la-Zouch Vehicle Conversion Centre is complemented by a growing UK presence in Glasgow, Exeter and an expanding regional conversion network.



The bott approach

Successful vehicle conversions are not defined solely by what is fitted inside.

They are **defined** by the **collaboration** that **delivers them**.

Three Principles Guiding Every Project

Designed Around Your World

Every successful vehicle conversion begins with understanding the customer's operation. While two organisations may operate identical vehicles, the demands placed upon them can be completely different depending on the sector, the people using them and the environment in which they work.

As Nick Smith explains:

"Every customer is different. Every fleet is different. Understanding how our customers operate is the starting point for everything we do."

Rather than beginning with products, bott begins by understanding how customers work, identifying operational challenges before designing a solution. That consultative approach enables the business to create conversions that improve productivity, safety and efficiency while ensuring each vehicle is designed around the customer's operation rather than a standard catalogue. It is a philosophy that has helped build long-term customer relationships based on trust and forms the foundation of every project.

Operational Excellence Delivered at Scale

A well-designed conversion is only valuable if it can be delivered consistently. Whether supplying ten vehicles or several thousand, fleet operators expect every vehicle to arrive to the same specification, on time and ready for work.

Nick believes consistency is earned through the way the business operates every day.

"Quality isn't something you inspect at the end of the production process. It has to be built into every stage, from engineering and procurement through to manufacturing, installation and final handover."



Through disciplined engineering, Lean manufacturing principles, continuous investment and a culture of improvement, bott has developed manufacturing processes that focus on quality, repeatability and efficiency. Every stage is monitored and continually refined to improve production performance while maintaining the high standards customers expect. The result is dependable delivery, shorter lead times and confidence that every vehicle will perform exactly as intended, regardless of programme size.

End-to-End, Without Exception

Modern vehicle conversions involve multiple technologies, suppliers and specialist disciplines. Rather than leaving customers to coordinate those different elements, bott manages the entire programme through a single point of responsibility.

For Nick, that responsibility extends well beyond delivering the completed vehicle.

"Our customers shouldn't have to spend their time coordinating multiple suppliers or resolving issues between different organisations. They want confidence that one experienced partner is taking responsibility for delivering the complete solution."

From the initial consultation and engineering design through to manufacturing, installation, quality assurance, vehicle handover and long-term aftersales support, every stage is managed as part of one integrated process. Even after the vehicle enters service, support continues through technical advice, digital tools and ongoing customer assistance. The aim is simple: to remove complexity for fleet operators while providing confidence throughout the life of the vehicle.



The in-house electrical expertise is just one element of the end-to-end operational excellence delivered by bott.

Looking Ahead

Over the coming three issues of **Essential Fleet Manager**, we will explore each of these principles in greater detail, examining how they translate into practical benefits for fleet operators and the role they play in improving vehicle productivity, operational efficiency and long-term fleet performance. ●

Talk to bott about your next vehicle conversion programme.

From initial consultation and design through to installation and ongoing support.

01530 410600 | v-sales@bottltd.co.uk | bottltd.co.uk/vehicle-conversions

bott



Shared Fault Data Helps Fleets Hold Manufacturers to Account

AFP Chair Paul Hollick

Sharing information about vehicle faults through the Association of Fleet Professionals (AFP) is helping fleet operators secure faster and more effective responses from manufacturers by demonstrating that issues are often far more widespread than initially suggested.

According to AFP Chair Paul Hollick, fleet managers reporting faults to vehicle manufacturers are frequently told their experience is an isolated incident. However, by comparing experiences across the AFP's membership, operators can identify recurring issues affecting multiple fleets and present manufacturers with evidence that a problem extends well beyond a single customer.

"We're living through a period when vehicle faults are becoming increasingly common, largely because of more complex vehicle design and technology, higher levels of specification and the widespread adoption of electric vehicles," he said.

"Problems vary in severity but frequently raise safety concerns or take cars and vans out of service. As a result, many fleet managers spend a disproportionate amount of time working with dealers and manufacturers to resolve them.

"Increasingly, our members share issues through a variety of AFP channels and, based on the responses received, are able to approach OEMs armed with evidence that demonstrates these experiences are common across multiple fleets."

Vehicle faults discussed during the AFP's latest Megafleets Committee meeting, which represents some of the UK's largest fleet operators, included handbrake failures, tyre issues, windscreen sensor software faults, vehicle alarm problems and traction battery concerns.

Hollick believes the industry is experiencing one of the most significant periods of technological change in its history, creating new challenges for both fleet operators and manufacturers.

"This is very much a transitional period for vehicle technology, not just because of electrification but also the growing reliance on software across modern cars and vans. As a result, faults are occurring more frequently, while shortages of replacement parts and suitably trained technicians can delay repairs.

"We have one AFP member that has resorted to fitting replacement traction batteries within its own workshops, with batteries supplied by the manufacturer under warranty, because the franchised dealer network simply didn't have the skills or capacity to complete the work."

While some manufacturers have responded positively, Hollick said the quality of support remains inconsistent across the industry.

"Almost every vehicle supplied to fleets today experiences some form of issue. What matters is how willing the manufacturer is to resolve those problems. Fleet operators want decisive, timely and effective action, not to be told their issue is a one-off when it clearly isn't.

"We've seen some manufacturers improve considerably in recent months, while others remain seemingly disinterested. There have been cases where AFP members have ended supplier relationships because the level of support simply wasn't good enough, and that can have a significant impact on brand reputation."●

Find out more about the Association of Fleet Professionals and its member network at www.theafp.co.uk



Rethinking Fleet Provision

For many organisations operating fleets across the essential services sector, vehicle availability is fundamental to maintaining service delivery. Whether supporting housing repairs, utility operations, highway maintenance, telecommunications or infrastructure projects, keeping vehicles on the road is critical to meeting customer expectations and contractual commitments.

However, fleet managers now operate in a very different environment from just a few years ago. Rising maintenance costs, extended vehicle lead times, ageing assets, increasingly demanding compliance requirements and the transition towards lower-emission vehicles have added new layers of complexity to fleet operations. As a result, vehicle rental and contract hire are no longer viewed simply as emergency replacement options. Instead, they have become strategic tools that help organisations improve resilience, maintain operational continuity and deploy vehicles more efficiently.

Rather than asking whether to rent vehicles, many fleet operators are now asking where flexible vehicle provision can deliver the greatest operational and financial benefit.



Why Demand for Vehicle Rental Continues to Grow

Flexibility is one of the biggest drivers of vehicle rental.

No fleet operates in a completely predictable environment. Vehicles require servicing and repairs, collisions occur, workloads fluctuate, and replacement vehicles are not always immediately available. At the same time, many organisations continue to experience extended delivery times for new vehicles, creating gaps between vehicles leaving service and replacements arriving.

Rental provides an effective way to bridge those gaps without compromising service delivery. Whether replacing a vehicle temporarily off the road,

providing additional capacity during periods of increased demand, or supporting temporary projects, rental allows organisations to respond quickly without committing to permanent capital expenditure.

Seasonal demand also plays a significant role. Local authorities may require gritters and snow-clearance vehicles in winter, utility companies often need additional specialist vehicles for emergency response work, and contractors regularly expand their fleets to support infrastructure programmes or major refurbishment projects.

Purchasing specialist vehicles that may be needed for only a few weeks each year is rarely the most efficient use of capital.



"Unexpected vehicle downtime doesn't have to disrupt operations. Rental vehicles provide immediate replacement transport, helping organisations maintain service delivery while repairs are completed."



"Rental and contract hire provide a practical way for organisations to trial electric vehicles in real-world operations, helping fleet managers assess vehicle suitability, charging requirements and driver acceptance before making long-term investment decisions."

Choosing the Right Type of Vehicle Provision

Vehicle rental is no longer a one-size-fits-all solution. Fleet managers now have access to a range of flexible options to meet diverse operational requirements.

Short-term or spot rental remains invaluable when vehicles are unexpectedly unavailable due to breakdowns, major incidents, or unplanned maintenance. It provides immediate continuity while minimising disruption to frontline services.

Medium-term rentals offer additional flexibility when organisations are awaiting new vehicle deliveries or supporting fixed-term contracts without committing to long-term ownership.

Long-term rental and contract hire offer many of the advantages traditionally associated with vehicle ownership without requiring significant upfront capital investment. For many organisations, these arrangements deliver predictable operating costs while reducing the administrative burden of vehicle ownership.

For fleets operating highly specialised commercial vehicles, contract hire has evolved far beyond simply financing vehicles. Many providers now offer complete fleet management solutions incorporating maintenance scheduling, compliance management, telematics, lifecycle planning and operational reporting. This enables fleet managers to retain strategic oversight while outsourcing much of the day-to-day administration.

The ability to combine vehicle provision with fleet management expertise has

become increasingly valuable as fleet operations grow more complex.

Supporting Smarter Procurement Decisions

Rental is also playing an increasingly important role in procurement planning.

Rather than committing to new vehicle types based solely on manufacturer specifications or demonstration drives, fleet managers can now trial vehicles under real operating conditions before making long-term investment decisions.

This has become particularly valuable as organisations transition towards electric and alternatively fuelled vehicles.

Access to rental vehicles enables organisations to evaluate charging infrastructure, vehicle suitability, operational range, payload implications and driver acceptance before committing to significant procurement programmes. Pilot schemes allow operational data to be gathered under real-world conditions, reducing the risk associated with introducing new technologies.

By engaging with rental providers early in the procurement process, fleet managers can ensure suitable vehicles are available for evaluation while aligning trials with operational requirements.

Rental as Part of a Wider Mobility Strategy

Vehicle provision is increasingly being viewed as part of a broader employee mobility strategy rather than simply a fleet management function.

Many organisations are reviewing their use of grey fleet vehicles as duty of care responsibilities and compliance expectations continue to increase.

Ensuring privately owned vehicles have appropriate insurance, valid MOTs and are maintained to a suitable standard can create significant administrative challenges.

Providing access to rental vehicles for occasional business travel offers a practical alternative, reducing grey fleet mileage while ensuring employees use modern, compliant vehicles.

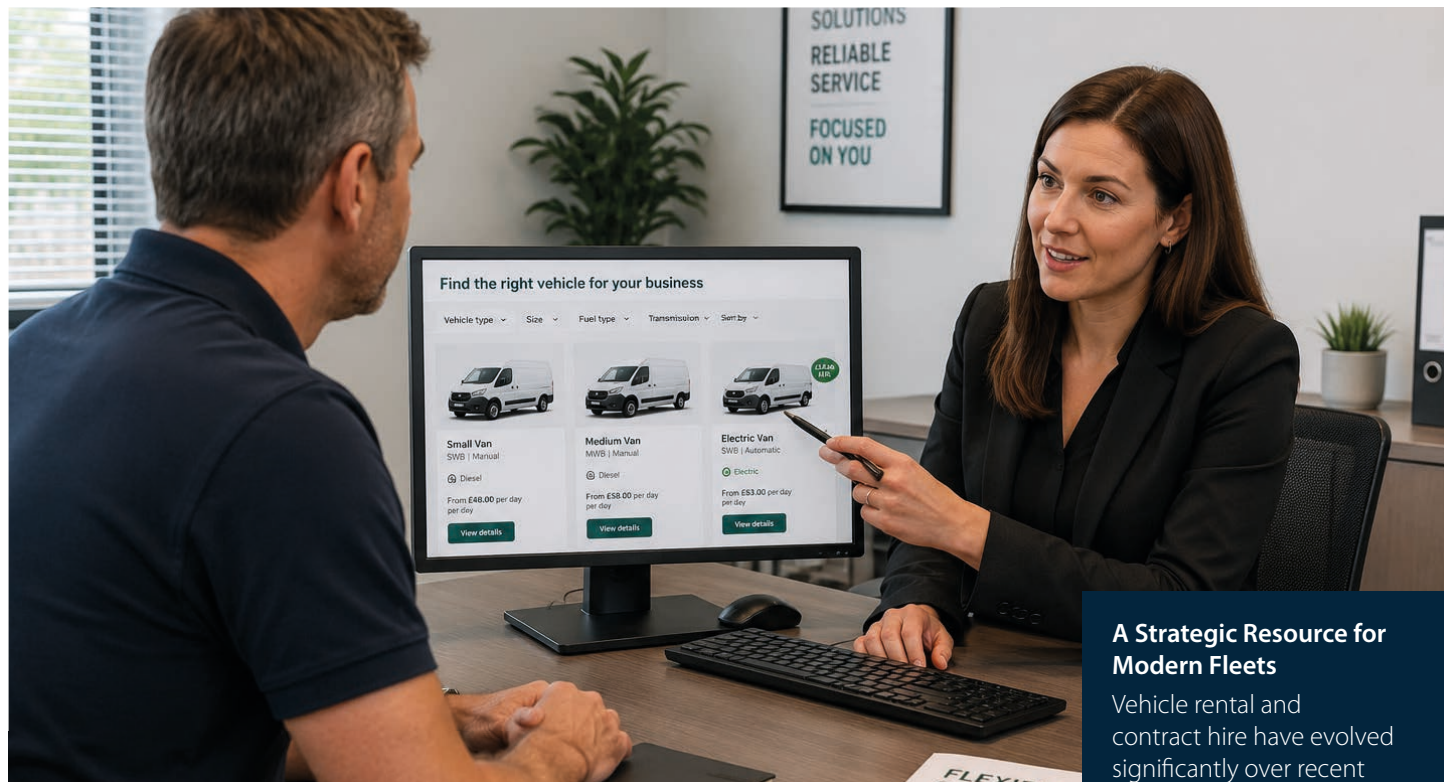
Pool car and vehicle-sharing schemes are also becoming increasingly popular. Rather than operating dedicated vehicles that remain unused for long periods, organisations can provide vehicles on demand through digital booking systems, improving utilisation while reducing unnecessary fleet growth.

Salary sacrifice schemes have similarly gained momentum, particularly in relation to electric vehicles. These programmes provide employees with access to newer, lower-emission vehicles while supporting recruitment, retention and wider sustainability objectives.

Collectively, these approaches demonstrate how vehicle provision is becoming increasingly integrated with broader workforce and environmental strategies.

"Vehicle rental offers a practical alternative to grey fleet, helping organisations reduce risk by providing employees with safe, modern vehicles for business travel."





More Than Simply Supplying Vehicles

Modern vehicle rental extends well beyond providing access to replacement vehicles.

Many agreements now include servicing, scheduled maintenance, manufacturer warranty support, Road Fund Licence, MOT management and roadside assistance as standard. Additional services frequently include nationwide delivery and collection, accident management, fuel cards, telematics and dedicated account management.

These bundled services reduce administrative workload while enabling fleet managers to focus on operational performance rather than day-to-day vehicle administration.

For organisations operating specialist commercial vehicles, maintenance support and breakdown response arrangements are particularly important. Vehicle uptime remains one of the most significant measures of fleet performance, making supplier capability every bit as important as vehicle availability.

Service quality, communication and reporting should therefore form part of any supplier evaluation alongside vehicle pricing.

Choosing the Right Partner

Selecting a rental or contract hire provider involves considerably more than comparing daily hire rates.

Fleet managers should evaluate vehicle availability, response times, national coverage, maintenance capability, specialist vehicle expertise and the provider's ability to support changing operational requirements over the

lifetime of the relationship.

For organisations operating specialist fleets, suppliers should demonstrate strong relationships with manufacturers, converters and specialist bodybuilders capable of delivering bespoke vehicle solutions as operational requirements evolve.

Contract flexibility is equally important. Fleet managers should carefully consider expected vehicle utilisation, contract duration, anticipated mileage and replacement cycles to ensure agreements align with operational realities. Contracts that are too restrictive can generate unnecessary costs when business needs change, while excessive flexibility may increase monthly charges.

End-of-contract processes also deserve careful consideration. Understanding fair wear and tear standards from the outset helps organisations implement appropriate driver guidance, vehicle inspection routines and damage management procedures, reducing the likelihood of unexpected charges at the end of the agreement.

Perhaps most importantly, the strongest providers act as strategic partners rather than simply vehicle suppliers.

Regular utilisation reviews, operational reporting and data analysis can help identify underused assets, opportunities for vehicle sharing, right-sizing exercises and longer-term cost savings. These insights enable organisations to maximise fleet utilisation while supporting continuous improvement across the wider operation.

A Strategic Resource for Modern Fleets

Vehicle rental and contract hire have evolved significantly over recent years. What was once viewed primarily as an emergency replacement service has become an integral component of modern fleet strategy.

Whether maintaining operational continuity, providing specialist vehicles, supporting seasonal demand, enabling electric vehicle trials, reducing grey fleet exposure or delivering flexible employee mobility solutions, rental provides organisations with the agility needed to respond to an increasingly complex operating environment.

For today's fleet managers, success is no longer measured solely by the number of vehicles they own, but by their ability to deploy the right vehicle, at the right time, for the right task. By selecting the right vehicle solution and partnering with providers capable of delivering long-term operational support, organisations can improve resilience, optimise fleet utilisation and ensure essential services continue to operate efficiently, whatever challenges lie ahead. ●

Framework Focus: ESPO launches New Specialist Vehicle Contract Hire and Leasing Agreement



Public sector fleet operators now have access to a new national procurement framework designed to simplify the hire and leasing of specialist operational vehicles.

The ESPO 218_26 Specialist Vehicle Contract Hire/Leasing Framework commenced on 20 July 2026 and runs until 19 July 2030, providing a compliant route for organisations to procure specialist vehicles on a medium to long-term contract hire or lease basis, with or without maintenance.

Operating under the Procurement Act 2023, the framework allows organisations to award contracts through a call-off process without the need to undertake a full procurement exercise or further competitive selection where appropriate, helping reduce procurement times while maintaining compliance.

Supporting Essential Service Fleets

Designed specifically for public sector organisations, the framework covers many of the specialist vehicles relied upon to deliver essential frontline services every day.

Whether supporting highways maintenance, waste collection, environmental services, passenger transport or specialist community services, fleet operators can access a wide choice of vehicle types, contract lengths and mileage options through a single procurement route.

The framework also provides flexibility for organisations seeking either vehicle-only contract hire or agreements that include maintenance support, enabling fleets to tailor contracts to

their operational requirements while achieving value for money.

Framework Lots

The agreement is divided into nine specialist vehicle categories:

- Lot 1** Refuse Collection Vehicles (RCVs)
- Lot 2** Sweepers
- Lot 3** Winter Maintenance Vehicles
- Lot 4** Gully Emptiers
- Lot 5** Buses and Minibuses
- Lot 6** Tippers
- Lot 7** Hook Loaders and Skip Loaders
- Lot 8** Other Specialist Vehicles
- Lot 9** Mixed Specialist Vehicle Fleets

The inclusion of a mixed fleet lot provides additional flexibility for organisations operating a diverse range of specialist vehicles under a single agreement.

Key Benefits

The framework has been designed to make procurement simpler and more efficient for public sector fleet operators, offering:

- A fully compliant procurement route under the Procurement Act 2023
- No requirement to undertake a full tender process
- Pre-qualified suppliers assessed for financial stability, technical capability and experience
- Pre-agreed contract terms and conditions
- Transparent pricing with no hidden charges
- Opportunities to deliver wider social value objectives
- Flexible contract periods and mileage options
- Vehicle-only or maintenance-inclusive contract hire solutions

Key Facts

Reference:	218_26
Framework Title:	Specialist Vehicle Contract Hire/Leasing
Start Date:	20 July 2026
End Date:	19 July 2030
Procurement Route:	Call-off without competition or further competitive selection process
Legislation:	Procurement Act 2023

Approved Supplier Network

Thirty suppliers have been appointed across the framework, including many of the UK's leading specialist vehicle manufacturers, rental providers and leasing specialists.

These include:

- Aebi Schmidt UK Ltd
- Bunce (Ashbury) Ltd
- Days Rental
- Cooper Group UK
- Dawsongroup Bus and Coach
- Dawsongroup Environmental Municipal Civil Ltd
- Econ Engineering Ltd
- Elite Refuse Ltd
- Endurance Vehicle Solutions Ltd
- Fiveways Municipal Vehicle Hire Ltd
- Fleet-e Ltd
- Hako Machines Ltd
- Harris Vehicle Hire Ltd
- James A Cuthbertson
- Kärcher UK Ltd
- LC Vehicle Hire
- Limesquare Vehicle Rental Ltd
- London Hire Ltd
- Marks Specialised Transport
- Midhire Self Drive Rentals Ltd
- Mistral Bus & Coach plc
- Multevo Ltd
- Murdoch MacKenzie Construction Ltd
- ND Brown Ltd
- Riverside Truck Rental Ltd
- Romaquip Ltd
- Scarab Sweepers Ltd
- Specialist Fleet Services Ltd
- TIP Group Tankers
- Torton Bodies

For more information visit: www.espo.org/specialist-vehicle-contract-hire-leasing-218-26.html

Europcar

Europcar: The Right Partner for the Essential Transition to Sustainable Fleets

According to the latest Europcar Sustainability Report, 2025 marked the point at which organisations began embracing electric vehicles at scale. However, the report, *Electrification Reaches Operational Maturity*, also highlights the challenges that remain. Regulatory pressures, including the ZEV Mandate, Scope 3 emissions reporting and evolving Benefit-in-Kind taxation, are all increasing the need for more flexible fleet management.

The challenges for Essential Services Fleets

And for essential services fleets, the challenges are even greater. These vital fleets can't afford regular charging stops, meaning range anxiety continues to hold back many employees and fleet managers from making the switch, even when budget is available. With incentives limited and costs remaining high, adoption is currently slow.

At Europcar, we believe reducing fleet emissions is the right thing to do, and we are committed to helping organisations across the public and private sectors achieve that.



Rental as a Strategic Tool

Over the last few years, Europcar has made a significant commitment to electric mobility, and that experience has provided us with the insight and expertise to deliver solutions that are fit for purpose in an evolving marketplace.

We know that the best way to understand how electric will work for an organisation is to experience it firsthand. With rental, businesses can understand any operational adjustments that might be needed, while drivers experience real-world electric driving. Supported by a detailed handover and a carefully selected electric vehicle that suits the needs of the job or journey, even previous EV sceptics are being converted to zero tailpipe emissions motoring.

We are continually adding new models to our electric fleet, with arguably one of the widest range of Plug-in Hybrid Electric (PHEV) and Battery Electric (BEV) models in the rental market. And we are making that fleet as accessible as possible with price parity to ICE models and tailored solutions for business users.

We are also continuing to invest in our charging infrastructure to ensure we can provide vehicles 80% charged

at the start of rental. Over 70% of the Europcar network now has Electric Vehicle (EV) charging facilities. Plus, to help ease the transition to electric, we provide access to the full suite of Octopus Electroverse features, including a real-time charger map with availability, speed and cost details as well as route planning functionality based on range and chargers along the route. And, to further support drivers gain a better understanding of EV life, we regularly update our free digital EV Guide and Knowledge Hub.





Fulfilling Scope 3 Requirements

Critically, EV rental is also playing a key role in enabling organisations to meet supply chain Scope 3 requirements quickly and affordably.

With mandatory UK Sustainability Reporting Standards (UK SRS) expected from January 2027, many supply chain businesses supporting the essential fleet services sector are now preparing to ensure their own compliance in order to protect existing contracts and commercial relationships. However, the current economic conditions mean they face big challenges to upgrade fleets.

Rental provides an agile, low-risk route into EV adoption to help organisations balance cost pressures and sustainability requirements of customers.

The eVan Factor

Transitioning to low and zero emissions is a particularly big challenge for commercial vehicle users, who remain hesitant to adopt electric vans at scale. Fit-for-purpose charging infrastructure and battery life when vehicles have a full payload remain key barriers.

In response, we have made a significant commitment to our eVan fleet, with vehicles in a range of sizes to meet a variety of use cases. This is helping businesses switch steadily without the burden of large upfront costs or long-term commitment.

The Partner of Choice for the EV Transition

As a leading proponent of electric motoring, Europcar has led the way in delivering mobility solutions that enable organisations to operate efficiently, effectively and sustainably without being tied into long-term lease agreements or residual value risks of ownership. And flexible EV rental allows businesses with seasonal demand or project-based work to add or remove electric vehicles from their fleet as often as necessary without penalties or delivery delays.

Find out more about how Europcar can support essential services organisations by visiting europcar.co.uk/business



Model Certainty with Europcar Flex Model Choice

With BiK playing a key role in EV adoption, Flex Model Choice provides the flexibility of rental with the vehicle model certainty of leasing so that employers can provide BiK to employees. Specific BEV/PHEV makes and models can be booked for 3 to 12 months at a fixed monthly rate, making it ideal for

salary sacrifice schemes.

It also gives customers the information needed to make an informed choice of vehicle – WLTP range, P11D value and fleet holding periods, for example. And rentals include maintenance, roadside assistance, all without long-term financial commitments. ●

Explore Long Term Rental Solutions at europcar.co.uk/business



Building a More Flexible Fleet

John Peters, Head of Arval Mobility Observatory in the UK

Introduction

Maintaining vehicle availability has become one of the biggest challenges facing today's fleet professionals. Whether responding to unexpected vehicle downtime, seasonal demand or changing operational requirements, organisations are increasingly looking for more flexible ways to keep essential services moving.

New research from the 2026 Arval Mobility Observatory reveals that 62% of fleets now use at least one mobility solution, with a further 24% considering adoption within the next three years. Essential Fleet Manager spoke to John Peters, Head of Arval Mobility Observatory in the UK, to explore what these findings mean for fleet resilience, vehicle rental and operational continuity. John explains why the future of fleet management is no longer about choosing a single method of vehicle provision, but about building the right mix of owned, leased, rented and shared vehicles to meet changing operational demands.

Interview

Q: The latest research shows almost two-thirds of fleets are now using mobility solutions. Do you see this as a sign that businesses are moving away from traditional fleet ownership towards a more flexible operating model?

It's a rather nuanced situation. If you look back a few years, there was a widespread expectation that advanced mobility solutions would play an important part alongside more established fleet provision – but this hasn't really happened in the UK. In fact, the mobility solutions showing the most growth are well-established

themselves, such as ride sharing, car sharing, and public transport booking and reimbursement apps. The kind of comprehensive app-based solutions that were envisaged, allowing employees to choose from a portfolio of transport options and plan their own journey, are being used by a few businesses here but not extensively. The Arval Mobility Observatory Barometer results suggest these discrete mobility options complement established company car solutions to fulfil specific needs – for example, if there is limited parking at a site.

"The most successful fleets won't move in one direction. They'll build the right mix of owned, leased, rented and shared vehicles to meet their organisation's changing operational needs."

Q: Vehicle availability has become a major operational issue over recent years. What role can short-term rental and flexible mobility solutions play in helping fleets maintain business continuity when vehicles are off the road, delayed or demand suddenly increases?

The attraction of short term rental as a solution to vehicle availability is its flexibility. Unless you have highly specialised needs, a rental company can probably provide a car or van to meet your needs, and there's a good chance they can deliver it within 24 hours. There's no contract, so you can hand it back whenever you want, and often all associated services such as insurance, breakdown recovery and servicing are included – you just need to add fuel. All of this makes it a really attractive option for fleets that need transport to ensure business continuity, especially where demand can significantly fluctuate. The downside is that it is not the cheapest method of vehicle provision and fleet managers tend to be quite careful in the extent of its use for this reason. An alternative option is vehicle sharing technology, which we see used more prevalently in other European countries, and can help businesses increase the utilisation of the assets by digitising the booking and operating of their vehicles.

Q: Many fleet managers are under pressure to reduce costs while improving vehicle utilisation. How can car sharing and ride sharing work together to maximise fleet efficiency without compromising service levels?

Car sharing and ride sharing reduces costs at the most fundamental level because

they encourage greater utilisation of an existing asset. Encouraging their adoption can be difficult, though. The best incentive is to provide employees with solutions that make their use easy and monitor the situation to quantify financial, carbon and efficiency improvements. There is little point simply saying to them that you'd like to see more car and ride sharing used where practical, you need to equip them with reliable systems that makes this kind of journey planning practical. There also needs to be internal recognition that your business is serious about promoting shared provision – if a number of employees take an identical car journey to attend a training course, for example, it should be underlined that this was an ideal opportunity for ride sharing.

Q: Do you think fleet managers should start viewing vehicle rental as a strategic part of their fleet mix rather than simply a contingency when something goes wrong?

Some fleets already do this, of course, using both short and medium term rental. If you have seasonal variations in your van needs, this form of vehicle provision makes huge sense with some form of flexible rental added periodically to the main fleet, and will be priced into the cost of serving their own customers. The key issue with using it as an ongoing core acquisition method is cost – it is a highly flexible form of car and van provision but also much more expensive than using contract hire, for example. No doubt some fleet managers would like to use more short and medium term rental because it is an effective way to solve operational problems but at a time when budgets are generally under pressure, this appears unlikely to become a major trend.

Q: Looking ahead over the next three to five years, what do you think the most successful fleets will be doing differently when it comes to balancing owned, leased, rented and shared vehicles?

What we expect is that instead of the market moving in one direction, there will be greater emphasis on businesses arriving at fleet acquisition mixes that meet their specific needs, and can also react in the most efficient way to their own customer's changing demands. We are able to help fleets gather increasing amounts of accurate information about their cars and vans, and how they are used, thanks to technologies ranging from telematics to connected car, and draw increasingly sophisticated conclusions from that data. As a result, we're potentially moving towards an era where strategic choices about the fleet are ever better informed, and deliver ever better outcomes. ●



www.arval.co.uk/amo-insight

About the Arval Mobility Observatory

The Arval Mobility Observatory is widely recognised as one of the authoritative research and industry information exchange platforms in the fleet and mobility sector. It aims at collecting and providing objective and accurate information to share with all kinds of audiences, helping them to better understand the new mobility paradigm we are operating in, and supporting them in navigating the jungle that is the ever-expanding selection of mobility solutions available.

For the 2026 Arval Fleet and Mobility Observatory survey, 10,157 company decision makers were interviewed across 33 countries by the independent research company, Ipsos, out of which 305 interviews took place in the UK. Participants were recruited and interviewed by telephone. The companies in scope operated at least one vehicle.

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Flexible Fleet Solutions for Operational Resilience

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Fleet managers are increasingly being asked to do more with less. Rising service demands, workforce changes, vehicle downtime and budget pressures can all affect operational delivery, while short-term or rapidly changing requirements may make it difficult to justify expanding the permanent fleet.

Flexible rental provides access to additional vehicles for as long as they are required, helping essential service fleets protect service continuity, maintain employee mobility and respond to changing operational needs without carrying unnecessary fleet capacity.

Meeting Seasonal and Specialist Requirements

Seasonal pressures can place additional strain on fleet resources. Severe weather, planned maintenance programmes and peaks in service demand may all increase the need for additional or more capable vehicles.

Access to 4x4s, SUVs and other specialist vehicles can be particularly valuable for essential service fleets that must maintain site access, support frontline teams and continue operating in challenging conditions.

Hiring these vehicles for a defined period avoids the cost and responsibility of owning assets that may remain underused for much of the year. It also enables organisations to strengthen resilience quickly when circumstances or service requirements change.



Supporting Employee Mobility

Ad hoc rental can also meet short-notice transport needs, from urgent site visits and temporary assignments to project work, emergency cover and mobilisation to new locations.

Rather than retaining surplus vehicles that may spend long periods idle, organisations can bring in suitable vehicles as demand arises. Rental can also provide temporary transport for new starters while permanent arrangements are being finalised.

It offers an alternative to employees using their own vehicles for business journeys. Professionally maintained, roadworthy and fit-for-purpose rental vehicles give organisations greater oversight of vehicle standards, servicing and suitability, helping to reduce risk and support duty-of-care responsibilities.



Flexibility Without Long-Term Commitment

New contracts, business growth, fluctuating workloads and changing driver needs can all alter fleet requirements at relatively short notice. Flexible rental allows additional capacity to be introduced without the lead times associated with procurement or the commitment of long-term ownership.

Switch offers rental periods from one month, with vehicle and mileage packages selected to reflect each customer's requirements. Maintenance and breakdown cover are included, providing greater cost certainty and helping to keep vehicles operational.

Vehicles can also be changed after as little as one month. This enables customers to adapt their vehicle choice as projects or workloads evolve and gives drivers the opportunity to trial an electric or hybrid vehicle before a longer-term commitment is made.

"Flexible rental gives organisations the freedom to respond as operational demands change, without committing to vehicles they may not need in the longer term."

A Partner for Business Continuity

As a wholly UK-owned rental provider, Switch offers access to a national fleet of more than 37,000 vehicles. The range includes cars, EVs, hybrids, 4x4s, MPVs, minibuses and commercial vehicles up to 3.5 tonnes.

A dedicated account manager, UK reservations team and nationwide branch network support customers in sourcing suitable vehicles where and when they are required.

Whether supporting seasonal demand, employee mobility, specialist requirements or short-notice operational pressures, flexible rental can help essential service fleets remain responsive while avoiding the cost of holding surplus vehicles within the permanent fleet.

www.switchcarrental.co.uk

Hiring a Vehicle? The Insurance Questions Every Fleet Manager Should Ask First

Vehicle hire offers fleets valuable flexibility, but insurance arrangements are not always as straightforward as many assume.

From temporary replacement vehicles to longer-term contract hire, understanding who is responsible for the vehicle, the driver and any potential claims is essential before the keys are handed over.

Ben Peters, Director at Hummingbird Insurance, highlights the insurance checks every fleet manager should make before any hired vehicle joins the fleet.



Whether you're hiring a vehicle for a day to cover a breakdown, adding capacity during a busy period or bringing in specialist equipment for a longer-term contract, insurance should be part of the decision from the outset, not something considered after the keys have been collected.

One of the biggest misconceptions in fleet management is that a hired vehicle is simply *"fully insured"*. In reality, cover can vary significantly between rental providers, and assumptions about who is responsible for what can become costly if something goes wrong.

Before signing a hire agreement, it's worth asking a few simple questions.

Is the Vehicle Covered Under Your

Fleet Policy?

Many fleet managers assume a hired vehicle automatically falls under their existing fleet insurance. Sometimes it does, but not always.

Some policies include cover for hired vehicles, while others require the vehicle to be declared before cover applies. The type and duration of the hire can also make a difference.

A quick conversation with your broker or insurer before the hire begins can prevent problems later.

What Insurance is the Rental Company Actually Providing?

The phrase *"fully insured"* can be misleading.

Ask exactly what the rental company's insurance includes, such as:

- Third-party liability
- Accidental damage
- Theft protection
- Windscreen and tyre cover
- Insurance excesses
- Replacement vehicle provision

Understanding what's included, and just as importantly, what's excluded, helps avoid unexpected costs if an incident occurs.

Are Your Drivers Authorised?

It's not enough for someone to be approved to drive company vehicles.

The rental agreement may include its own restrictions around age, licence categories, endorsements or named

"Assumptions *cost money.*
Questions *protect fleets. Hiring a vehicle should*
provide flexibility, not uncertainty."

drivers. If someone who isn't authorised drives the vehicle, it could complicate both the insurance and the rental agreement.

Checking driver eligibility before the vehicle leaves the depot takes only a few minutes but could save a significant amount of time and money later.

Who is Responsible if Something Goes Wrong?

Even where insurance is provided by the rental company, your business may still be responsible for insurance excesses, damage outside the policy terms or breaches of the rental agreement.

It's also important to know what happens following an incident.

- Who should the driver contact first?
- Does the rental company need to be informed immediately?
- Does your own insurer also need notifying?
- Who arranges recovery or a replacement vehicle?

Having these answers before an incident occurs makes the claims process far smoother and reduces unnecessary downtime.

Don't Forget the Hidden Costs

The daily hire rate is only part of the overall cost.

Large insurance excesses, recovery charges, administration fees and loss-of-use costs can all add up quickly following an incident.

Looking beyond the headline rental price helps ensure you're comparing the true cost of hire rather than simply the cheapest daily rate.

Think Beyond Insurance

Many fleets now rely on telematics, cameras and other connected

technologies to manage driver safety and investigate incidents.

Temporary hire vehicles may not have the same systems fitted, meaning less visibility if something goes wrong.

If hired vehicles form a regular part of your operation, it's worth considering how they fit into your wider fleet risk strategy rather than treating them as separate from the rest of the fleet.

A Simple Pre-hire Checklist

Before accepting any hired vehicle, ask yourself:

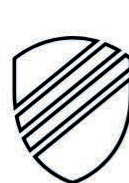
- Is the vehicle covered by our fleet insurance?
- Do we need to notify our broker or insurer?
- What insurance is included with the hire?
- Who is responsible for any insurance excess?
- Are all intended drivers authorised?
- What happens if the vehicle is damaged or stolen?
- Who manages the claims process and replacement vehicle?

The bottom line

Hiring a vehicle should provide flexibility, not uncertainty.

Most insurance issues don't arise because businesses deliberately ignore the rules, they happen because assumptions are made. Assuming the vehicle is covered, assuming every driver is authorised or assuming the rental company's insurance takes care of everything can leave fleet operators facing unexpected costs and unnecessary disruption.

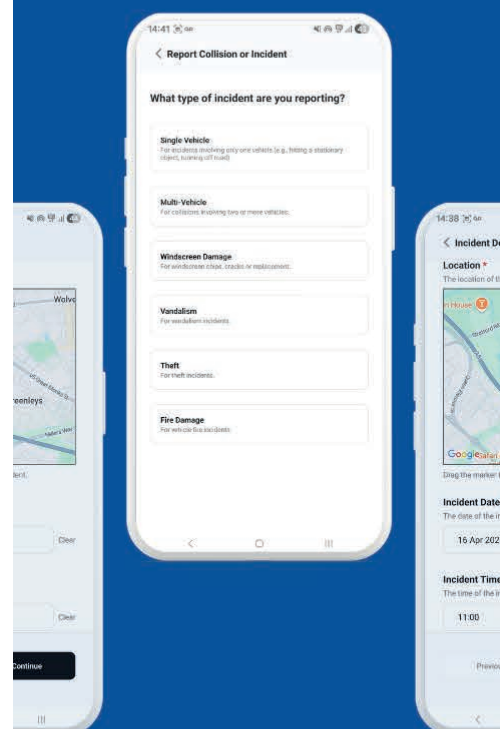
By asking a handful of straightforward questions before the hire begins, fleet managers can avoid common pitfalls, protect their business and ensure that a temporary vehicle doesn't become a long-term headache. ●



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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.



**Chris Harrington**Associate Legal Director and Solicitor
CE Transport Law

Hiring or leasing commercial vehicles has become a common and practical solution for many operators. Whether it is to meet seasonal demand, replace vehicles awaiting delivery or maintenance, or avoid the cost of ownership, contract hire and leasing can offer significant operational benefits.

However, there is one misconception that continues to catch operators out. Hiring a vehicle does not hire out your legal responsibilities!

Too often, operators assume that because a third party owns or maintains the vehicle, responsibility for compliance also sits with them. In reality, that is not the case. The operator using the vehicle remains responsible for ensuring it is safe, compliant and operated in accordance with road transport legislation.

A Hired Vehicle. The Same Legal Duties!

The Operator Is Still Accountable

A maintenance agreement may include servicing, inspections and MOT preparation, but it does not transfer legal responsibility. If a vehicle is issued with a DVSA prohibition because of defective tyres, faulty brakes or poor maintenance, the question will not simply be who owned the vehicle. The regulator will want to know who was responsible for ensuring it was operated safely and compliantly.

Similarly, if an operator is called before the Traffic Commissioner, it is unlikely to be an acceptable defence to say, "The hire company was responsible for maintenance." The responsibility for ensuring compliance remains firmly with the operator.

Operator Licensing Still Matters

Where an Operator's Licence is required, hiring or leasing a vehicle does not remove those obligations. Operators must ensure hired vehicles are correctly specified on their Operator's Licence where required, operated within licence authority. It is also essential that maintenance arrangements, inspection frequencies and record keeping remain fully compliant.

Assuming that because a vehicle has arrived from a reputable hire company it is automatically ready for service can be an expensive mistake. Complete a first-use

inspection or obtain and review the most recent PMI, ensuring it complies with your specified inspection intervals.

Roadworthiness Starts Before the Vehicle Leaves the Operating Centre

One of the most common misunderstandings is that a newly delivered hire vehicle does not require a daily inspection.

It absolutely does.

Every commercial vehicle should be subject to the same daily walk-round checks regardless of who owns it. Any defects must be reported immediately and, where safety-critical, repaired before the vehicle is used.

Ownership is irrelevant. Roadworthiness is not.

Maintenance Contracts Need Managing

Many operators see a fully maintained contract hire agreement as a compliance solution. It certainly helps. But maintenance contracts still require active management.

Appointing a maintenance provider is only one part of compliance. Operators must still monitor inspection intervals, review maintenance documentation and satisfy themselves that repair work is being completed to the required standard.

Operators should understand:

- When Preventative Maintenance Inspections (PMIs) are due.
- Who is responsible for booking inspections.
- How defects are reported.
- How repairs are authorised.
- That maintenance records are available to the operator and can be produced promptly if requested.
- Whether brake testing forms part of the maintenance contract. If not, appropriate brake performance testing must be arranged independently.
- If the maintenance provider differs from the operator's usual provider, ensure the maintenance provider details are updated on the Operator Licensing (VOL) system.

If the DVSA requests maintenance documentation, operators should be able to produce it without relying on the hire company to search for paperwork days later.

As with every aspect of compliance, oversight is just as important as the maintenance itself.

Documentation Demonstrates Control

As I regularly remind operators, compliance is not simply about doing the right thing. It is about being able to prove you did it. *"If it's not written down it never happened!"*

If drivers are completing walk-round checks, those checks should be recorded. If defects are reported, there should be evidence they were rectified. If maintenance inspections have taken

place, operators should be able to demonstrate they have reviewed the reports rather than simply filed away. Traffic Commissioners consistently place significant weight on evidence of proactive management. Good paperwork demonstrates good control. Poor paperwork often suggests the opposite.

Common Mistakes We Continue to See

Several issues arise time and time again when operators rely on hired vehicles. Maintenance paperwork remains with the leasing company and is unavailable when requested. Defects are reported directly to the hire provider without informing the transport office, resulting in incomplete records. Temporary vehicles enter service without confirming Operator's Licence requirements or maintenance arrangements.

None of these problems are particularly complicated. They are simply failures of communication and oversight.

Fortunately, they are also entirely avoidable.

A Few Simple Steps Can Prevent Bigger Problems

Operators using hired or leased vehicles should treat them exactly as they would vehicles they own. Ensure every driver completes a documented daily walk-round inspection. Confirm maintenance schedules and inspection intervals before the vehicle enters service. Obtain copies of maintenance records and retain them within your own compliance system. Regularly review defect reports and inspection documentation.

Above all, maintain effective oversight.

Key Message

Hiring or leasing a vehicle can provide flexibility, reduce costs and improve fleet resilience. What it cannot do is transfer your legal responsibilities.

Whether the vehicle is owned, leased or hired, the expectations placed upon operators remain exactly the same. Safe vehicles, effective maintenance, documented inspections and robust compliance systems are not optional; they are legal requirements.

Contracts may allocate responsibilities between businesses, but they do not transfer legal accountability. Whether a vehicle is owned, leased or hired, the operator remains responsible for ensuring it is safe, roadworthy and compliant every time it leaves the operating centre.

Hired or owned – there is no difference to your compliance obligations.

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

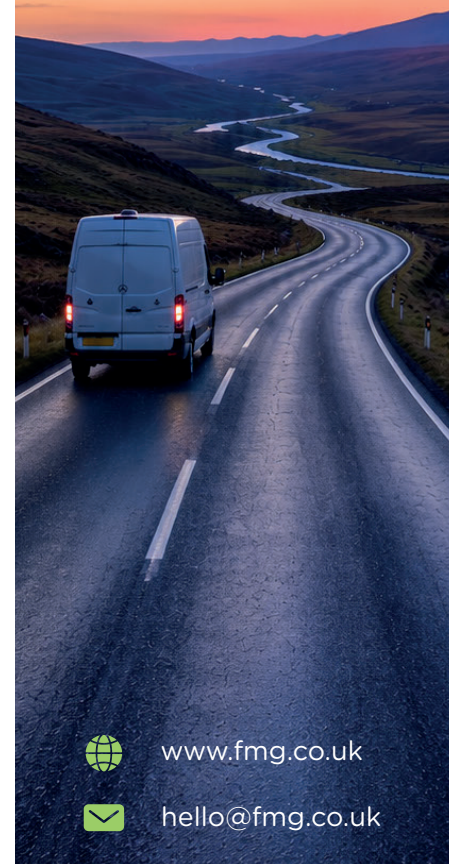


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How **bott** is Helping the Water Industry Master the Challenges of Electrification



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One of bott's core values is designing solutions around its customers' worlds, an approach recently demonstrated through its involvement in a collaborative electric van trial bringing together partners from across the fleet industry.

What began as a visionary idea just over a year ago has developed into a strong industry collaboration, uniting organisations with a shared ambition to embrace the future of van electrification. Spearheaded by Elaine Pringle, Fleet Manager at Scottish Water, the Water UK Fleet Forum partnered with bott, Farizon and MICHELIN Connected Fleet to create a real-world trial of the Farizon SV, which has now been rolled out across a number of water companies within the forum.

Thanks to the flexibility of the Farizon SV, bott was able to specify the vehicle and provide a bespoke conversion using its bott vario3 system. The needs of the water industry were carefully understood and the vehicle tailored accordingly, while the modular capability of the conversion has enabled the differing operational requirements of each company within the forum to be accommodated.

The trial, which began with Scottish Water in August last year, has since moved on to Northumbrian Water, Yorkshire Water,

United Utilities and Anglian Water. The next organisations to take part will be Wessex Water, followed by South West Water.

While these fleets share many operational similarities, the terrain and driving conditions vary considerably. This has allowed the trial to assess range, battery performance and payload capability across a broad range of real-world operating environments. As with any effective trial, clear metrics are in place to measure the key performance indicators and, with support from MICHELIN Connected Fleet, the early findings suggest there has already been much to learn and build upon.

bott provided the conversion free of charge in the interests of developing solutions collaboratively with this critical utilities sector. The project also demonstrates how bott's understanding of fleet operations can be translated into practical, sector-specific conversion solutions that extend far beyond vehicle racking, reinforcing its fleet positioning of: *"Your operation, we help you master it."*

As the trial nears its conclusion, it is expected to provide a wealth of best practice and operational insight that will help support the wider industry as it continues its transition towards electric commercial vehicles.

"bott prides itself on designing solutions around our customers' requirements, absorbing complex challenges and working in collaboration across the supply chain, so it was an honour to support this visionary trial."

Kim Smith,
UK Head of Direct/Fleet Sales, bott

"I am proud of this collaboration, not just with key strategic fleet partners but also with our fellow members in the Water UK Fleet Forum as we continue the electrification journey we are all on."

Elaine Pringle,
Fleet Manager, Scottish Water



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Fleet Vehicle Focus: Farizon Brings Fresh Thinking to the Electric Van Market



As the UK's electric van market becomes increasingly competitive, fleet operators have more choice than ever before.

While established manufacturers continue to expand their electric vehicle ranges, newer entrants are introducing fresh ideas, innovative technologies and purpose-built platforms designed specifically for zero-emission commercial transport.

One of the latest manufacturers to establish a presence in the UK is Farizon Auto. Part of the Geely Group, the company may still be unfamiliar to some fleet operators, but it is beginning to attract attention through its expanding product range, purpose-built electric vehicle platform and growing involvement with UK fleet evaluations.

Rather than adapting existing diesel vehicles, Farizon's vans have been engineered from the outset as fully electric commercial vehicles. This dedicated approach allows engineers to optimise vehicle packaging, maximise available load space and integrate technologies specifically designed for electric operation.

For organisations reviewing replacement programmes or planning the transition to zero-emission fleets, Farizon represents another option in an increasingly competitive marketplace where practicality, efficiency and whole-life operating costs are becoming just as important as outright purchase price.

Designed Around Fleet Operations

Farizon has developed its range around the operational requirements of commercial fleets rather than a single vehicle specification.

The larger SV is available with a choice of body lengths, roof heights and battery capacities, enabling operators to select vehicles that closely match operational requirements. Depending on specification, battery capacities range from 67kWh to 106kWh, delivering a WLTP combined driving range of up to 247 miles and up to 342 miles in urban driving conditions.

The introduction of the V7E further broadens the range by targeting urban and last-mile operations. Its more compact dimensions provide another option for organisations operating in congested towns and cities where manoeuvrability and efficient space utilisation are key priorities.

Rather than offering a one-size-fits-all solution, Farizon has sought to provide fleet operators with a choice of vehicles capable of supporting a wide variety of operational roles.

Practicality Comes First

For fleet managers, driving range is only one part of the purchasing decision. Load capacity, ease of loading, driver comfort and operational efficiency all play an important role when selecting new commercial vehicles.

The Farizon SV offers up to 13m³ of load volume, payloads of up to 1,365kg and a low loading height of just 550mm,

helping reduce physical effort during loading and unloading. A pillar-less nearside loading design creates an exceptionally wide side opening, improving access for drivers carrying equipment or undertaking frequent multi-drop deliveries.

Across both the SV and V7E, the emphasis has been placed on improving everyday usability through practical design features that can enhance productivity throughout the working day.

Technology Supporting Fleet Performance

Modern electric vans are expected to deliver far more than zero-emission driving, and Farizon has equipped its vehicles with technology aimed at supporting both drivers and fleet managers.

Available features include a 360-degree surround-view camera, a comprehensive suite of Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS), payload monitoring, Vehicle-to-Load (V2L) capability and a range of driver comfort features that are standard on many models. Payload monitoring is particularly valuable for fleet operators, helping drivers remain within legal weight limits while supporting compliance, improving safety and reducing operational risk.

Rapid DC charging helps minimise vehicle downtime, while the combination of connected technologies and driver assistance systems reflects the increasing importance of safety, efficiency and operational visibility within modern fleet management.



"The Water UK Fleet Forum trial is giving major water companies the opportunity to evaluate the Farizon SV where it matters most, in day-to-day operational use."

Collaborative Evaluation Through the Water UK Fleet Forum

Farizon is also gaining valuable operational insight through a collaborative trial led by the Water UK Fleet Forum and spearheaded by Scottish Water. Supported by bott and MICHELIN Connected Fleet, the Farizon SV is being evaluated by several major UK water companies in day-to-day utility operations.

The trial is monitoring factors including payload, driving range, charging behaviour, vehicle utilisation and operational practicality to provide fleet managers with real-world evidence of how dedicated electric commercial vehicles perform in demanding utility environments. The collaboration is explored in more detail elsewhere in this issue.

Early Fleet Impressions

Fleet professionals recently had the opportunity to evaluate the Farizon range during Company Car in Action at UTAC Millbrook, where the manufacturer showcased both the V7E and L1H1 and L3H3 versions of the larger SV alongside a wide range of competing electric vans.

The event enabled fleet decision-makers to assess the vehicles in representative driving conditions and compare them directly with established manufacturers.

Rob Anderson from Mitie commented:

"The V7E is very capable and feels like a car to drive, with good power delivery. I think van drivers will be very happy. The interior quality is also great and has been designed with the driver in mind, with comfortable seats and key controls falling easily to hand."

Lauren Berry from Riverside Housing Association highlighted both the driving experience and practicality:

"The Farizon V7E provided a very smooth drive that isolated bumps in the road well, and cargo space was also impressive. Our current fleet is made up of diesel and petrol vehicles, and the V7E compared brilliantly. Other manufacturers certainly have something to worry about."

Dionne Hanlon from cap hpi also identified the vehicle's suitability for urban operations:

"The V7E has a slight competitive edge for us by being a little smaller and ideal for cities and last-mile delivery duties. I found it highly manoeuvrable, and it handled the city course with ease."

The 20-vehicle order from MCFT highlights growing confidence in Farizon's electric van range



FARIZON

While these are early impressions rather than long-term operational assessments, they suggest that Farizon's emphasis on practicality, driver comfort and usability is resonating with fleet professionals evaluating electric commercial vehicles.

Growing Interest from UK Fleets

According to Calum James, General Manager at Farizon Auto UK, interest from fleet operators continues to increase as organisations accelerate their transition towards zero-emission transport. The company's first significant UK fleet order came from commercial kitchen equipment supplier MCFT, which ordered 20 Farizon SV vans, while the launch of the V7E has broadened its appeal across a wider range of fleet applications.

The manufacturer has also received industry recognition, with the Farizon SV reaching the finals of the 2026 International Van of the Year Awards and receiving Trade Van Driver Awards for Best Technical Innovation and Best Large Zero Emission Van.

A Serious New Challenger for UK Fleets

The UK electric van market continues to evolve rapidly, providing fleet operators with an increasing number of purpose-built commercial vehicles designed around operational requirements rather than adapted from conventional diesel platforms.

Although Farizon remains a relatively new entrant to the UK market, its expanding product range, growing involvement in fleet evaluations and emphasis on practical vehicle design demonstrate how competition within the sector continues to drive innovation.

For fleet operators, increased manufacturer choice can only be positive. A broader selection of vehicles enables organisations to identify solutions that best match their operational needs while encouraging continued advances in vehicle design, technology and whole-life fleet performance. ●

www.farizonauto.co.uk



Managing Requests to Take Fleet Vehicles Abroad

Essential Checks Before Approving Overseas Travel

Summer often brings an increase in requests from employees wanting to take a company vehicle overseas. Whether it's extending a business trip into annual leave, driving to a European holiday destination or using a company car while working abroad, these requests can present a number of practical, legal and insurance considerations for fleet managers.

While approving overseas travel may seem straightforward, allowing a fleet vehicle to leave the UK without the appropriate documentation or insurance could expose both the organisation and the driver to unnecessary risk.

Before saying yes, there are several important questions every fleet manager should ask.

Is Overseas Use Permitted?

The first consideration is whether the vehicle is actually permitted to leave the UK.

If the vehicle is leased, contract hired or rented, the leasing company may require formal authorisation before it can be taken abroad. Many providers issue a VE103B certificate, which acts as proof that the driver has permission to use the vehicle outside the UK. Without

this document, drivers could encounter difficulties if stopped by police or border authorities.

Fleet managers should also remember that obtaining a VE103B is not an instant process. Depending on the provider, it can take between five and fourteen days to arrange, making early notification essential.

Does Insurance Extend Overseas?

Insurance should never be assumed.

Although many fleet policies include European cover, the level of protection can vary. Fleet managers should confirm:

- Which countries are covered.
- Whether comprehensive cover remains in place overseas.
- Whether business and personal use are both permitted.
- Any restrictions that apply to the length of time the vehicle can remain outside the UK.

Equally important is breakdown assistance. A UK breakdown policy does not always include European recovery, so additional cover may be required before travel is approved.

Is the Vehicle Legally Equipped?

Driving regulations vary across Europe,

and responsibility often falls on both the driver and the organisation to ensure the vehicle complies with local legislation.

Depending on the countries being visited, vehicles may need:

- A UK identifier.
- Headlamp beam deflectors.
- Reflective high-visibility vests.
- Warning triangles.
- A first aid kit.
- Country-specific emissions permits, such as France's Crit'Air vignette.

Failure to carry mandatory equipment can result in roadside fines and unnecessary disruption to the journey.

Does the Driver Understand Local Road Rules?

Approving the journey should also include ensuring the driver understands the regulations that apply overseas.

This may include:

- Driving on the right-hand side of the road.
- Different speed limits.
- Lower drink-drive limits.
- Low Emission Zones.
- Toll road payment systems.
- Priority rules at junctions and roundabouts.



Providing drivers with country-specific guidance before departure helps reduce the likelihood of penalties and improves overall driver safety.

Consider Your Duty of Care

Authorising overseas travel does not remove an organisation's duty of care.

Long journeys increase the risk of driver fatigue, particularly during busy summer travel periods. Fleet managers should encourage drivers to:

- Plan routes in advance.
- Take regular breaks.
- Avoid driving when tired.
- Stay hydrated.
- Share driving where appropriate.

For business travel, journey planning should also allow sufficient time to avoid unnecessary pressure and reduce the temptation to speed or drive for excessive periods.

Should You Have an Overseas Vehicle Policy?

Rather than assessing each request individually, many organisations benefit from introducing a simple overseas vehicle policy.

The policy could define:

- Which employees may take vehicles abroad.
- Whether private overseas use is permitted.
- Notice periods for requesting approval.
- Documentation required before travel.
- Insurance responsibilities.
- Breakdown arrangements.
- Driver responsibilities while overseas.
- Procedures following a collision or breakdown.

Having a clear process ensures requests are handled consistently and helps demonstrate effective fleet governance.

Preparation Reduces Risk

For many organisations, allowing employees to take fleet vehicles abroad is a routine part of business. However, every request should be treated as a compliance exercise rather than simply an administrative approval.

By checking documentation, insurance, legal requirements and driver preparedness before the vehicle leaves the UK, fleet managers can protect both their organisation and their drivers, while ensuring overseas journeys begin with confidence rather than complications.●

Fleet Manager's Approval Checklist

Before approving overseas travel, confirm:

- ✓ The vehicle is permitted to leave the UK.
- ✓ A VE103B certificate has been arranged where required.
- ✓ European insurance cover has been confirmed.
- ✓ European breakdown assistance is in place.
- ✓ The vehicle carries all legally required equipment.
- ✓ The driver understands local driving laws and restrictions.
- ✓ Any Low Emission Zone permits have been obtained.
- ✓ The organisation's overseas vehicle policy has been followed.

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ADAS Doesn't Prevent Collisions. Drivers Do.

Technology can assist, alert and intervene, but the driver remains in control

Today, almost every new passenger car and light commercial vehicle entering the fleet market is equipped with some form of Advanced Driver Assistance System (ADAS). Features such as Autonomous Emergency Braking (AEB), Lane Keeping Assist (LKA), Intelligent Speed Assistance (ISA), Blind Spot Monitoring and Driver Attention Monitoring are now commonplace, helping to support safer driving and reduce the likelihood of collisions.

Yet, despite the rapid adoption of ADAS, road traffic incidents continue to occur every day.

The reason is simple: ADAS is designed to assist the driver, not replace them.

Drivers remain responsible for every decision they make behind the wheel, and no amount of technology can replace good observation, anticipation and awareness of potential hazards.

As more vehicles equipped with sophisticated driver assistance technology enter service, the real opportunity lies in ensuring drivers understand what these systems do, how they operate, where their limitations lie and, perhaps most importantly, why they should work with them rather than against them.

Assistance, Not Autonomous Driving

One of the biggest misconceptions surrounding ADAS is that modern vehicles

are capable of driving themselves.

They are not.

Advanced Driver Assistance Systems are exactly that, assistance systems. They are designed to warn, support and intervene where appropriate, but responsibility for the safe operation of the vehicle always remains with the driver.

Automatic Emergency Braking may reduce the severity of a collision or even prevent one altogether, but it cannot be relied on to predict every situation.

Lane Keeping Assist can help prevent unintended lane departure, but poor road markings, roadworks, severe weather or worn lane markings can affect how the system performs. Likewise, Intelligent Speed Assistance can recognise speed limit signs, but drivers must still remain aware of temporary speed restrictions, roadworks and changing traffic conditions.

Understanding the limitations of ADAS is just as important as understanding its capabilities.

"ADAS is designed to support good driving, not replace it."

Different Drivers, Different Attitudes

One of the realities facing today's fleet managers is that drivers have very different attitudes towards ADAS.

Some drivers quickly embrace the technology, appreciating the additional

support and reassurance it provides.

Others find frequent warning sounds frustrating, misunderstand why systems intervene or actively switch certain features off because they feel they interfere with their driving style.

Experience also plays a part.

Drivers who learned to drive before ADAS became commonplace often pride themselves on being self-reliant and may view some of these systems as unnecessary. Equally, younger drivers who have only ever driven vehicles equipped with ADAS may become accustomed to relying on technology and could find themselves less confident when driving older vehicles without these features.

This has become an increasing discussion point within the driver training industry.

As new drivers enter the workplace with experience of highly assisted vehicles, fleet managers may need to ensure they are equally capable of safely operating older vehicles that offer little or no electronic driver assistance.

Any technology designed to support drivers also has the potential to create over-reliance. Until every vehicle on the road offers the same level of driver assistance technology, fleet drivers will continue sharing the road with older vehicles, poorly maintained vehicles and drivers with varying levels of experience.

Good driving practices remains the first line of defence.

Driver Familiarisation Makes the Difference

Many organisations invest significant sums in specifying vehicles with the latest safety technology, yet comparatively little time is spent ensuring drivers understand how those systems work.

Introducing a new vehicle into the fleet should involve far more than simply handing over the keys.

Drivers should receive practical familiarisation covering:

- The ADAS technologies fitted to the vehicle.
- What each system is designed to do.
- When the systems are likely to intervene.
- Circumstances where performance may be limited.
- How warnings are presented.
- What drivers should do when alerts occur.

Even a relatively short handover can improve driver confidence, reduce frustration and encourage drivers to use the technology as intended.

Every Manufacturer Does It Differently

One challenge often overlooked is the variety of ADAS systems fitted across the vehicle market.

Although manufacturers offer broadly similar technologies, they often operate in very different ways.

- Warning sounds differ.
- Displays look different.
- Steering intervention varies.
- System sensitivity changes between manufacturers.

Even the terminology used to describe similar functions is not always consistent.

For organisations operating mixed fleets, or where drivers regularly move between different makes and models, assuming every vehicle behaves in the same way can lead to confusion.

Whenever drivers change vehicles, even temporarily, a short familiarisation session can help build confidence and reduce unnecessary frustration.

Understanding Why Drivers Switch Systems Off

Fleet managers are often told that drivers disable ADAS because they dislike the technology.

The reality is usually more complex.

Many drivers report frustration with frequent audible warnings or interventions they were not expecting. Lane Keeping Assist, for example, may gently steer the vehicle back towards the lane markings if the system believes the vehicle is drifting unintentionally. Drivers who are unfamiliar with how the system operates, or who make sudden manoeuvres without signalling, can find these interventions unnerving.

Rather than simply instructing drivers not to switch systems off, fleet managers should seek to understand why they are doing so.

Driver feedback can identify where additional familiarisation is required, highlight recurring concerns and, where manufacturer settings allow, help ensure systems are configured appropriately without compromising safety.

ADAS Should Form Part of Fleet Policy

As driver assistance technology continues to evolve, ADAS should become part of wider fleet management policy rather than simply being viewed as another vehicle specification.

Policies should consider:

- Driver familiarisation requirements.
- Procedures for reporting system faults.
- Guidance on when systems may be adjusted or disabled.
- Driver responsibilities when using ADAS-equipped vehicles.
- Refresher training following vehicle changes.
- Recording driver feedback.

Embedding ADAS within driver

management policies helps create consistency across the fleet while encouraging greater understanding of the technology.

Preparing for the Next Generation of Fleet Safety

Vehicle technology continues to develop at an extraordinary pace.

Future fleet vehicles will feature increasingly sophisticated systems capable of monitoring driver behaviour, identifying hazards earlier and providing greater levels of intervention.

However, regardless of how advanced these technologies become, the driver's role remains unchanged.

Safe driving still depends on concentration, sound judgement, observation and hazard perception.

Technology can provide another layer of protection, but it cannot replace professional driving standards.

The Fleet Manager's Opportunity

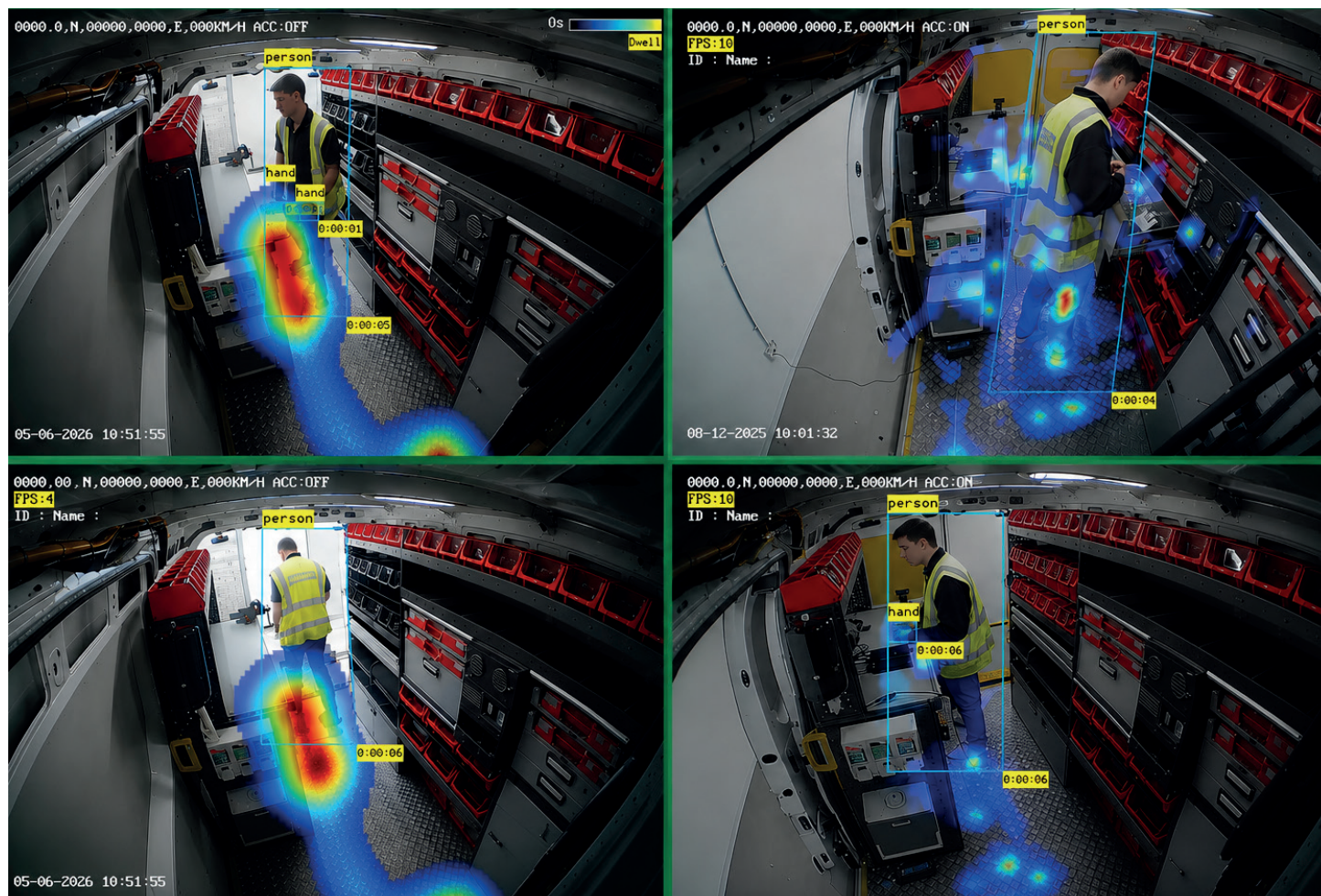
For fleet managers, the opportunity goes beyond ordering better-equipped vehicles. The greatest benefits come from combining modern technology with driver familiarisation, clear policies and ongoing engagement.

The safest fleets will not simply have the most technology, but drivers who understand how to use it confidently and effectively.

ADAS can support safer driving, but people still make it happen.

Technology can support safer driving. People still make it happen.●





Modul-System to trial AI-powered 'Modul Workspace Intelligence' with SGN

New data-led approach aims to optimise vehicle layouts, improve ergonomics and increase fleet efficiency

For decades, commercial vehicle conversions have been designed using engineering expertise, customer experience and industry best practice. But until now, there has been no reliable way of knowing whether a vehicle is truly configured for the way it is used in the real world.

Modul-System UK is seeking to change that with the launch of Modul Workspace Intelligence, an AI-powered workspace optimisation programme that combines vehicle usage data with operational job information to provide evidence-based recommendations for improving productivity, ergonomics, safety and fleet efficiency.

Rather than asking 'What racking should this vehicle have?', the programme asks a more important question: 'Is this vehicle actually configured correctly for the job it performs?'

Turning Data into Performance

As part of the process, a discreet AI camera system is temporarily installed inside a working vehicle for a two-week audit. The technology is designed to measure workspace performance—not employee performance—creating

a heatmap of how the load space is actually used. This information is analysed alongside operational job-card data to build a picture of real-world working practices.

- Which tools and equipment are accessed most frequently
- Whether high-use items are positioned in the optimum location
- Components and stock that are rarely or never used
- Unnecessary movement that increases job duration
- Poor ergonomic practices caused by equipment positioning
- Opportunities to simplify layouts and standardise fleet specifications
- Potential reductions in unnecessary weight and redundant storage

Following the audit, the equipment is removed and Modul-System's engineering team provides a tailored optimisation report based on actual operational behaviour.

Optimising the Workspace—not Simply Filling it

The programme is expected to demonstrate that many vehicle layouts are based on assumptions rather than

evidence. Frequently used tools may be positioned furthest from the working area, while prime storage locations are occupied by equipment rarely accessed. It may also identify material bins that are never opened, tools that are carried but never used and opportunities to simplify the overall storage specification. The objective is to carry the right equipment in the right place.

Better Ergonomics. Better Productivity. Better safety.

By understanding movement patterns inside the vehicle, Modul Workspace Intelligence enables layouts to be redesigned around ergonomic principles,

reducing unnecessary bending, stretching and walking while helping improve productivity and health and safety.

The programme helps fleet managers answer questions such as:

- Is this vehicle configured correctly for its actual use case?
- Can frequently used equipment be positioned more effectively?
- Are we carrying stock that adds no value?
- Could we simplify our vehicle specification?
- Can layouts be standardised based on evidence rather than tradition?

First Customer Trial with SGN

The first live deployment of Modul Workspace Intelligence will take place with SGN, where the system will be installed into operational vehicles to evaluate how real-world data can be used to optimise vehicle layout, ergonomics and productivity. The findings will help determine how evidence-based workspace design can support future fleet specification and operational performance.

Chris Mullings, Fleet Manager, SGN, said:

"At SGN, we're continually looking for innovative ways to improve the efficiency, safety and effectiveness of our frontline engineers. The opportunity to use AI and real-world operational data to better understand how our vehicles are actually utilised is an exciting development. If the insights generated can help us optimise vehicle layouts, reduce unnecessary movement and improve ergonomics for our teams, it has the potential to deliver meaningful benefits across our fleet. We're looking forward to working with Modul-System on this trial."

Kevin Walker, Managing Director, Modul-System UK, said:

"For years, vehicle conversions have been designed using engineering expertise and industry best practice. That experience remains invaluable, but we now have the opportunity to validate those decisions with real operational data. Modul Workspace Intelligence is not about monitoring people—it is about understanding how the workspace performs. By combining AI insight with engineering expertise, we aim to design vehicles that are safer, more ergonomic, more productive and ultimately more cost-effective for our customers. We believe this trial could demonstrate a new evidence-based approach to vehicle specification."

About Modul-System UK

Modul-System UK is a leading provider of intelligent vehicle conversion and storage solutions, helping commercial fleets improve productivity, safety and operational performance. ●



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

Solutions for Improving Fleet Sustainability

Fleet managers face increasing pressure to reduce emissions, control fuel costs and provide accurate sustainability reporting. Connected fleet technology can support these objectives by identifying inefficiencies, improving asset utilisation and providing reliable operational data.

Modul-Connect brings vehicle, journey, load and equipment information together in one platform, helping fleets make more informed sustainability decisions.

Its driving journal records mileage and categorises business and private journeys. Fleet managers can view vehicle locations, analyse historical data and download reports through the Customer Portal. This supports compliance and sustainability reporting while highlighting unnecessary mileage and opportunities to improve route planning.

Vehicle weight also affects efficiency. Underloading can result in additional journeys, while overloading increases fuel or energy consumption and accelerates wear on tyres and suspension components. Modul-Connect's weighing system monitors axle and total vehicle weight, issuing an alert when an overload is detected. This can improve compliance and support more efficient vehicle use.

Maintaining tools and equipment for longer can also reduce waste. Scheduled maintenance notifications help keep tools in working condition, while Tool Tracker provides real-time location and status information. These features can reduce tool loss, replacement costs and avoidable downtime.

Modul-System also provides auxiliary power and heating solutions for electric, hybrid and conventional vehicles. e-Power can be charged through AC, DC or solar power and used with e-Inverters to operate tools and appliances. The e-Heater provides zero-emission heating and can be remotely activated through Modul-Connect.

Together, these connected solutions can help fleets reduce consumption, improve reporting, extend equipment life and support the transition to lower-emission vehicles.

Speak to our team to discover how Modul-Connect can reduce fuel consumption, improve compliance reporting, and support your sustainability targets. ●



Sector News in Brief

Fleet investment is no longer simply about replacing ageing vehicles. Across the Essential Services sector, organisations are investing in connected technology, specialist vehicles, charging infrastructure and large-scale replacement programmes to improve operational resilience, vehicle availability and efficiency.

Although each organisation faces different operational challenges, recent investment activity highlights several common priorities. This feature looks beyond the announcement to explore what organisations are investing in, why those decisions have been made and what fleet operators can learn from them.

South East Coast Ambulance Service Prioritises Vehicle Availability

South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust has awarded a Make Ready services contract worth almost £100 million. The model ensures ambulances are cleaned, checked, restocked and prepared before returning to operational duty, allowing clinical staff to focus on patient care rather than vehicle preparation.

For emergency services, maximising vehicle availability is critical. Dedicated fleet preparation reduces turnaround times while maintaining consistent vehicle standards across the fleet.

Planned Maintenance Supports Service Continuity

Cardiff and Vale University Health Board has appointed a specialist fleet maintenance provider to support its operational vehicles, while Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust has invested in a specialist community outreach health vehicle to expand healthcare delivery beyond traditional clinical settings.

Although very different projects, both demonstrate that procurement begins with operational need. Whether investing

in maintenance support or specialist vehicles, the objective is to improve service delivery rather than simply acquire new assets.

Recovery and Employee Mobility Form Part of Fleet Strategy

West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust has strengthened its roadside recovery arrangements to improve fleet resilience, while Haringey Council has introduced an electric vehicle salary sacrifice scheme as part of its wider transport strategy.

These investments recognise that effective fleet management extends beyond operational vehicles. Recovery arrangements, employee mobility and workplace charging all contribute to overall fleet performance.

Kier Combines Digital Technology with Fleet Expansion

Kier has introduced a connected operations platform across its vehicles, plant and mobile assets while also securing major infrastructure contracts through the YORbuild framework and an extension to its South West Water Network Services Alliance.

The technology will provide greater visibility of vehicles and equipment, helping reduce downtime and improve utilisation, while the contract awards will increase demand for operational vehicles supporting construction and infrastructure projects.

Together, these investments demonstrate how fleet technology and vehicle planning increasingly go hand in hand.

Data and Charging Drive Future Fleet Decisions

Openreach continues to expand its use of operational fleet data to support maintenance planning, route optimisation and decisions about where electric vans can be introduced most effectively.

National Highways has meanwhile continued investing in charging infrastructure across operational depots, recognising that successful electrification depends as much on infrastructure as the vehicles themselves.

Both organisations are using operational evidence to support

future investment rather than relying solely on vehicle age or replacement cycles.

Specialist Fleets Require a Whole-Life Approach

Yorkshire Water is procuring specialist emergency response vehicles, including potable water tankers, articulated units, trailers and supporting equipment, together with long-term maintenance support.

Unlike standard vans or company cars, these assets are expected to provide reliable service during emergencies where vehicle availability is essential. Procurement therefore extends beyond vehicle specification to include maintenance, parts support and operational resilience.

Across the utilities sector, specialist vehicles continue to be managed using a whole-life approach that considers durability, maintenance requirements and long-term operational performance alongside purchase cost.

Royal Mail Invests in Fleet Renewal

Royal Mail is investing approximately £150 million in around 6,800 replacement vehicles during the 2026/27 financial year, representing its largest annual fleet renewal programme for more than a decade.

Alongside improving reliability and reducing maintenance costs, the programme will continue expanding the organisation's electric delivery fleet while supporting future operational requirements.

Rather than simply replacing ageing vehicles, the programme provides an opportunity to reassess payload requirements, route suitability, charging infrastructure and long-term operating costs.

Common Lessons for Fleet Operators

The organisations that manage fleets across the Essential Services sector operate in very different environments, yet their investment decisions reveal remarkably similar priorities. Improving vehicle availability, making better use of operational data, reducing downtime, strengthening resilience and adopting a whole-life approach to fleet management are increasingly influencing procurement decisions across the sector.

Successful fleet investment begins with a clear understanding of the operational challenge rather than simply replacing ageing vehicles. Vehicles, technology, maintenance and supporting infrastructure should be considered as part of a single fleet strategy, supported by accurate utilisation and maintenance data.

For fleet operators, the real value lies not simply in knowing what other organisations are buying, but in understanding the thinking behind those investment decisions. By learning from the approaches taken by other fleets, organisations can benchmark their own strategies and make more informed decisions that improve operational performance, resilience and long-term value.

The following pages feature a selection of recent stories from across the Essential Services sector, highlighting how organisations are investing in vehicles, technology and operational improvements to meet changing service demands, improve efficiency and support frontline delivery.●

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BYD Supports St John Ambulance Co-Responder Pilot in Norfolk

BYD is supporting a six-month co-responder pilot that will see St John Ambulance volunteers respond to 999 calls across Norfolk in a fully electric SEALION 7.

Working alongside the East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust (EEAST), the St John Ambulance team will provide clinical assessment and potentially life-saving treatment before an ambulance crew arrives.

The pilot will examine its impact on emergency response capacity and patient outcomes, with the potential for the model to be introduced in other regions of England. It could also help ease pressure on frontline ambulance services by enabling trained volunteers to begin treatment sooner and, where appropriate, safely resolve incidents at the scene.

BYD is providing the SEALION 7 for the duration of the pilot. The vehicle will be fully liveried, equipped with blue lights and adapted to carry essential medical equipment, including defibrillators, oxygen, airway management equipment and emergency medicines.

Its 520-litre luggage compartment provides space for the team's equipment, while the twin-motor powertrain produces 530PS. The vehicle also offers a stated electric range of up to 312 miles, supporting extended periods of operational use.

St John Ambulance says its co-responders

are first to arrive at more than 94% of the incidents to which they are dispatched, allowing treatment to begin before the arrival of an ambulance crew.

The teams have also been able to assess, treat and safely discharge some patients at the scene, helping to preserve ambulance resources for the most urgent calls.

Jeanette Griggs, National Corporate and Public Sector Manager at BYD UK, said:

"BYD is extremely proud to support St John Ambulance by supplying a SEALION 7 for the EEAST trial."

"The vital work St John Ambulance carries out in communities across the country saves lives, and we believe the SEALION 7's fully electric performance, range and practical cabin make it well suited to supporting its co-responders."

"We are looking forward to seeing the impact the trial has for St John Ambulance and the communities it serves."

Tom Willis, Head of Clinical Standards at St John Ambulance, is leading the Norfolk pilot and is also one of its active co-responders.

He said: "We are immensely grateful to BYD for loaning a fully electric response car. Having a dedicated vehicle for this pilot is essential to ensuring our volunteers can reach patients quickly and begin care at the earliest possible moment."

"This scheme is about working in



partnership with our NHS colleagues to provide additional support where it is most needed, helping to improve outcomes for patients while easing pressure on frontline resources."

"The early results are very encouraging. Our teams are reaching patients quickly, providing immediate care and, in some cases, resolving incidents without the need for an ambulance to attend. That is a positive outcome for patients and the wider health system."

He added that using an electric vehicle would also help reduce operating costs.

"The loan of the BYD SEALION 7 will help us direct donations towards life-saving interventions rather than rising fuel costs, enabling the scheme to operate more efficiently and with greater impact."

St John Ambulance provides its services to the NHS free of charge and relies on public support, partnerships and donations to maintain its work in communities across the country.●



Oxfordshire introduces first dual fuel hydrogen highways maintenance vehicle

Oxfordshire has become the first local authority in England to harness hydrogen power for highway maintenance by introducing a dual-fuel hydrogen and hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO) truck.

Oxfordshire County Council's principal highways contractor, M Group, has welcomed the arrival of a 3.5-tonne highways maintenance truck – the first hydrogen-powered vehicle across the company's 10,000-vehicle UK fleet and a significant milestone in the decarbonisation of frontline highway operations.

The vehicle marks an important step in both M Group's and Oxfordshire County Council's commitments to reducing carbon emissions while exploring practical alternatives to conventional diesel-powered maintenance vehicles.

Compared with diesel, hydrogen used alongside HVO can significantly reduce tailpipe carbon emissions by an average of 30 to 40 per cent. The dual-fuel system also lowers harmful pollutants such as nitrogen oxides (NOx), helping improve local air quality while supporting the council's wider environmental ambitions across Oxfordshire.

While the fuel technology is new, the vehicle itself is not.

Hydrogen technology specialists ULEMCo have retrofitted a standard highways maintenance truck to operate using a dual-fuel hydrogen and HVO system, with the conversion funded by M Group. By adapting an existing vehicle rather than purchasing a new one, the trial also demonstrates how existing fleet assets can be upgraded to support lower-emission operations. ULEMCo will also convert a second vehicle, expected to be a medium or larger HGV, which is scheduled to join the Oxfordshire fleet in early 2027.

Richard Lovewell, M Group's Business Director, said:

"M Group Highways has an ambitious target of being net zero carbon by 2040. We're excited to be working with Oxfordshire County Council to trial practical solutions that can accelerate the journey to net zero."

Councillor Liz Leffman, Oxfordshire County Council's Cabinet Member for Highways Construction and Repair, said:

"The climate emergency is the biggest challenge the planet faces, and we are committed to not only reaching our own net zero target as a council by 2030 but to enabling Oxfordshire to be carbon neutral well ahead of 2050."

"We are delighted to be working with M Group to trial this innovative technology

which will mean lower emissions and cleaner air across Oxfordshire."

The dual-fuel vehicles will be used to transport highways crews, equipment and materials to sites across the county, supporting a wide range of road repairs and maintenance activities while gathering valuable operational data under real-world conditions.

Highways crews have received in-depth training covering the refuelling, operation and maintenance of the converted vehicles, with particular emphasis on driver safety, public safety and the handling of hydrogen technology.

Alongside driver feedback, the trial will monitor a range of operational performance measures, including fuel efficiency, operating costs, vehicle reliability and maintenance requirements. The findings will help determine whether hydrogen can provide a practical low-carbon solution for wider deployment across highway maintenance fleets.

With HGVs and trucks accounting for around 17 to 21 per cent of UK road transport emissions, Oxfordshire's trial could provide valuable evidence to support the wider adoption of hydrogen technology for specialist commercial vehicles and accelerate the transition to lower-carbon highway maintenance operations. ●

NG Bailey Accelerates Fleet Transformation with Connected Technology

NG Bailey has launched a major fleet transformation programme designed to improve driver safety, operational efficiency, sustainability and compliance across its nationwide vehicle operation.

The engineering and infrastructure services business, which operates more than 600 light commercial vehicles supporting critical customer services throughout the UK, has partnered with fleet management specialist Webfleet and fleet management provider Zenith to deliver the initiative.

Early pilot results have already demonstrated measurable operational improvements, including a 3% improvement in fuel economy and a 25% reduction in wasted fuel, helping lower both operating costs and carbon emissions.

Lee Jackson, Group Fleet Manager at NG Bailey, said the investment represents a much broader transformation than simply introducing telematics technology.

"Our investment in Webfleet is about much more than telematics. It is helping us create a safer working environment for our colleagues, improve operational performance and make more informed decisions about the future of our fleet."

"The platform supports NG Bailey's long-standing 'Safety First & Foremost' culture, but equally important is giving our managers and drivers better information, reducing unnecessary administration and supporting our journey towards a more sustainable fleet."

Driver performance monitoring through Webfleet's OptiDrive 360 platform is providing real-time visibility of driving behaviour, enabling targeted driver coaching and performance improvements. During the pilot programme, harsh driving events reduced by 25%, speeding incidents fell by 26%, idling decreased by 5%, while AI camera-triggered safety incidents were

cut by 35%.

The introduction of AI-enabled safety cameras is also helping protect drivers and the wider public by identifying high-risk behaviours and providing objective evidence when incidents occur.

"This helps us protect our drivers, challenge fraudulent claims and ensures we can make fair, informed decisions based on facts," Jackson added.

The programme is also strengthening vehicle maintenance through closer collaboration with Zenith. Automated vehicle inspections, digital defect reporting and proactive maintenance alerts are enabling issues to be identified earlier, reducing vehicle downtime and helping maintain fleet availability.

"By identifying issues earlier and using real-time vehicle data, we can reduce disruption, improve maintenance planning and maximise vehicle availability for operational teams," said Danni Fearon, Strategic Programme Lead at Zenith.

Alongside improving day-to-day fleet operations, NG Bailey is using real-world utilisation, mileage and route data to support future vehicle replacement decisions and identify where electric vehicles can be successfully integrated into the fleet.

Live vehicle tracking, digital driver identification and utilisation reporting are also providing greater visibility of fleet activity, helping improve workforce

planning, asset utilisation and customer service across multiple business divisions.

Jackson said collaboration between all three organisations had been central to the programme's success.

"One of the most important aspects of this programme has been the partnership approach. Webfleet has worked alongside NG Bailey and Zenith to understand our long-term objectives and help shape a solution that delivers real value. Together we are building a safer, smarter and more sustainable fleet that supports both our people and our customers."

Alex Crane-Robinson, Regional Director UK & Ireland at Webfleet, added: *"By combining driver safety, vehicle compliance, operational efficiency and sustainability into a single connected platform, NG Bailey is creating a future-ready fleet capable of supporting its ambitious business objectives."*●





Free Digital Tool Unveils Powerful New Insights to Accelerate EV Rollout

Pictured: The team involved in developing the new EV planning tool.

Local authorities rolling out public electric vehicle charging can now plan and deliver schemes faster, with clearer visibility of connection costs, timelines and feasibility, following a major upgrade to a free digital tool used.

ChargePoint Navigator will now provide clearer, faster and more actionable insights into EV charge point connections, transforming how councils plan, fund and deliver public charging infrastructure.

The introduction of enhanced Connections Insights gives customers unprecedented clarity on likely connection costs, eligibility and timelines for each individual charge point.

The platform's new automatic assessment of connection viability offers a reliable benchmark that reduces the need for manual interpretation and helps set expectations early, supporting smoother pre connections application conversations and greater confidence when navigating DNO processes.

By combining site selection, planning intelligence, rollout monitoring and connections guidance within one platform, ChargePoint Navigator has significantly reduced the administrative burden on local government officers.

Realtime dashboards, transparent connection information and intuitive visualisation tools are helping teams cut down on the time previously

spent searching for information, reconciling spreadsheets and re-entering data across multiple systems. This more streamlined journey has strengthened collaboration across teams and accelerated progress from planning to delivery.

The tool was originally launched in 2024 to support applications for the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) fund, helping councils move from a 37% first time success rate to 100% in the space of a year. After listening closely to customer feedback, the platform has now evolved, shifting from broad webinars to tailored one to one engagement with LEVI lead local authorities and expanding its features to support every stage of deployment.

Today, ChargePoint Navigator is free and available to all 133 local authorities in UK Power Networks licence area, with 108 local authorities using it, up from 82 in May 2025. Customer satisfaction has grown from 91% to 94%, driven by more personalised support and a set of new capabilities shaped directly by the needs of councils.

In addition to the depth of work ChargePoint Navigator has facilitated within our licence areas, its adoption across the sector in other geographies demonstrates its maturity and value in promoting the rollout of public charging for EVs. SP Energy Networks and Transport for Wales, and now Northern Ireland

Electricity Networks too have all begun using the tool, expanding its coverage to local authorities in Scotland, the North West and the whole of Wales.

As demand for public EV charging continues to grow, ChargePoint Navigator is evolving alongside the sector, giving local authorities the clarity, confidence and practical support they need to deliver reliable charging infrastructure at scale.

Lynne McDonald, head of local net zero at UK Power Networks DSO said:

"Every improvement in ChargePoint Navigator is shaped directly by the day-to-day challenges our users face and what they have told us matters. We've listened closely to councils, and these new enhancement ensure they can make confident, data driven decisions for their public EV charge point roll out from the very start."

Tim Middleton - Network Innovations Manager at Kent County Council, working with ChargePoint Operator Urban Fox, said:

"The upgrades made to ChargePoint Navigator this year have made our site selection significantly quicker and easier. Having the local authority and CPO working from the same tool and dataset helps keep the rollout on track. The new connections functionality alone saves us a huge amount of time - with costs, eligibility and guidance all in one place, we can quickly identify which sites are feasible and work far more efficiently with our partners." ●



Specialist Vehicles Strengthen Front-Line Fire and Rescue Operations

Fire and rescue services across the UK are investing in a new generation of specialist vehicles designed to improve operational resilience, firefighter safety and environmental performance.

From wildfire response and crew welfare vehicles to high-capacity water carriers and fully electric trucks, the latest additions demonstrate the increasingly diverse demands placed on modern fire service fleets.

Supporting Crews at Prolonged Incidents

South Wales Fire and Rescue Service has introduced four combined welfare and wildfire response vehicles to provide greater support for crews attending extended incidents.

Built on Mercedes-Benz Atego chassis supplied by Euro Commercial Cardiff, the vehicles were constructed by Neath Coach Builders, with emergency warning equipment installed by Elite of Bridgend.

The four vehicles transport the service's Can-Am 6x6 all-terrain wildfire response units and replace the Land Rover and trailer combinations previously used for this role.

Their design also recognises the



importance of supporting firefighter welfare during prolonged deployments. Each vehicle incorporates toilet facilities, a microwave and a fridge, allowing crews to rest and recover close to the incident ground without being withdrawn from the operation.

Lee McCarthy, General Manager of Neath Coachbuilders, said: *"It's a privilege to work on a project that strengthens the safety and wellbeing of firefighters."*

"Our team put immense pride into this build, and its completion is a testament to the craftsmanship and collaboration behind it."

Maintaining such specialist assets is a significant undertaking. South Wales Fire and Rescue Service's fleet and engineering department is responsible for more than 480 emergency vehicles, with each vehicle undergoing four services

every year.

The team also maintains equipment ranging from water bowzers and aerial ladder platforms to specialist rescue vehicles, while providing continuous support to help keep front-line resources operational.

London Fire Brigade Introduces Electric Trucks

London Fire Brigade is also modernising its fleet with the introduction of its first fully electric large goods vehicles.

Two 16-tonne Renault Trucks E-Tech D electric trucks are now being used to transport essential equipment across London and support the brigade's response to incidents. They replace diesel vehicles that had been operating for more than 20 years.



Their introduction follows two years of trials at the brigade's Operational Support Centre. The vehicles are fitted with telematics technology, enabling the brigade to collect real-time information about operational performance and energy efficiency.

This data will help fleet teams understand how electric trucks perform in demanding public service roles and inform decisions about the future expansion of the brigade's zero-emission fleet.

Eight Volvo XC40 electric cars have also been introduced at training centres in Ruislip, Beckton and Croydon. The vehicles are used by instructors delivering blue-light driver training and refresher courses for senior officers.

London Fire Brigade has additionally developed a Zero Emission Pumping Appliance, known as ZEPA1, which is being trialled at Hammersmith Fire Station.

The transition forms part of the brigade's Carbon Net Zero strategy. London Fire Brigade reports that it has reduced its carbon dioxide emissions by 59 per cent since 1990 and now generates more than ten per cent of its energy from renewable sources located on its own estate.

Carlos Rodrigues, Senior Vice President of Renault Trucks Europe, said:

"The Renault Trucks E-Tech D vehicles demonstrate that electric technology can deliver the performance, reliability and capability required for demanding public service roles.

"This rollout reflects our shared commitment to reducing emissions and creating a cleaner, more sustainable future for London."

Major Appliance Programme Completed

Emergency One has completed the delivery of 52 new fire appliances to West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service.

The Ayrshire-based manufacturer delivered an average of one appliance each week, completing the programme to schedule.

Built predominantly on Scania chassis, the appliances incorporate a range of features intended to improve capability and firefighter safety. These include 2,500-litre water tanks, additional equipment storage and power-operated ladder gantries.

The gantry automatically lowers ladders to a safer working height, reducing the need for firefighters to reach equipment positioned on top of the vehicle. This is particularly important where larger water tanks and additional locker capacity have increased the overall height of the appliance body.

Brian Girvan, Production Director at Emergency One, said: *"Delivering 52 appliances to this kind of schedule is a real achievement and a testament to the commitment of our build and support teams.*

"More importantly, we're proud to deliver vehicles that not only meet the operational needs of West Yorkshire but also help enhance firefighter safety and support cleaner, more modern working environments."

Greater Resilience in Areas with Limited Water Supply

West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service has strengthened its ability to respond

to large and complex incidents with the addition of two 18-tonne Volvo water carriers.

Custom-built by Emergency One, each vehicle can transport 9,000 litres of water and supply it directly to an incident using its own hoses and hose reel.

The vehicles also carry two inflatable dams capable of storing 10,000 litres of water. These can be deployed to create a temporary water supply, enabling appliances to maintain firefighting operations while the carrier travels to collect additional water.

Water carriers are particularly valuable at incidents in rural areas or locations where hydrant availability and water pressure may be limited. They can also provide additional capacity during major fires requiring sustained volumes of water.

Councillor Duncan Crow, Cabinet Member for Community Support, Fire and Rescue, said:

"This is a significant investment from West Sussex County Council to modernise our fleet and replace the current vehicles which have reached the end of their operational lives.

"These new vehicles offer greater operational resilience to help keep people living and working in West Sussex safe."

Vehicles Designed Around Operational Need

The latest investments illustrate how fire and rescue fleet strategies are evolving to meet a broader range of operational, environmental and workforce requirements.

Modern fire service vehicles are no longer defined solely by their ability to transport crews and equipment. Increasingly, they must support firefighter welfare, operate in challenging environments, accommodate larger volumes of specialist equipment and provide fleet teams with accurate performance data.

At the same time, services must carefully balance these operational requirements with vehicle availability, whole-life costs and commitments to reduce emissions.

Whether through electric technology, safer equipment handling systems or vehicles designed for specialist wildfire and water-supply operations, close collaboration between fire services, manufacturers, converters and equipment suppliers remains essential to delivering vehicles that are ready for the demands of front-line service. ●

Source: SMMT

Falcon Buses Unveils its New Fleet of Electric Buses at Brooklands Museum

Thirteen state-of-the-art vehicles set to hit the road in Surrey this month, supported by a major depot upgrade by VEV.



Pictured: Representatives of Falcon and VEV on site at the Wintersells Road depot

Falcon Buses is accelerating towards a greener future with the rollout of 13 new electric buses and a landmark depot upgrade that will help transform public transport across Surrey.

Supported by Surrey County Council and the Department for Transport's ZEBRA 2 scheme, the state-of-the-art electric buses are set to hit the road across Falcon's network this month, heralding a new era of quieter, cleaner journeys for passengers while delivering a carbon saving of around 13,000 tonnes over their lifetime.

Based out of West Byfleet, the family-owned business is one of the first independent small bus operators to go electric, working in partnership with commercial fleet experts VEV to transform its depot on Wintersells Road to accommodate its growing fleet of EVs.

VEV has delivered a complete charging solution for the site, including a dedicated 1,500kVA power supply together with six 60kW chargers and three 120kW chargers. All charging infrastructure will be managed through VEV's award-winning smart charging and digital energy management platform, VEV IQ, which will monitor and optimise power usage, charging scheduling, and charger status to ensure maximum efficiency and reliability for the fleet.

Speaking at the official launch of the new fleet at Brooklands Museum this week, Richard Telling, Managing Director at Falcon Buses, said: "This

is a hugely significant milestone for Falcon. Introducing our first electric buses marks the beginning of a new chapter for the business and demonstrates our commitment to delivering cleaner, quieter and more sustainable transport for the communities we serve.

"Working with VEV has enabled us to build the infrastructure we need not only for the first 13 electric buses entering service today, but for the continued growth of our fleet over the coming months and years as we work towards our goal of an all-electric bus fleet by 2033."

Steve Bax, Deputy Cabinet Member for Highways at Surrey County Council said, "I'm delighted that Surrey residents will benefit from 13 new electric buses, to add to the county's growing fleet of cleaner, greener buses.

"Introducing these buses is expected to deliver an estimated carbon saving of thirteen tonnes over their lifetime, which is

great news for residents and for everyone travelling in and out of Surrey. We are committed to becoming a net-zero county by 2050 and reducing carbon emissions from transport will be absolutely key to achieving this."

Electrifying Fleets

The project marks another milestone in VEV's growing portfolio of bus electrification projects, delivering the power infrastructure and charging technology required to support Falcon's transition to all-electric operations for their 58-strong bus fleet.

A second phase of infrastructure, due to be completed later this year, will increase charging capacity to five 120kW chargers, five 60kW chargers and two 50kW chargers, ensuring the depot is ready to support Falcon's long-term electrification plans. By using a REGO-backed renewable electricity supply, Falcon is expected to further reduce



Four of Falcon's 13 new electric buses

emissions by around 168 tonnes of CO₂e annually compared with a standard electricity supply.

Barry Keane, Senior Account Manager at VEV, said: *"This project is about more than installing chargers. It's about giving operators the confidence that they have the power, charging capability and future capacity needed to transition to zero-emission transport without compromising reliability."*

"Every successful electric bus transition starts with the right infrastructure. At Falcon Coaches, we've delivered a charging solution that's designed not only for today's operations, but for tomorrow's ambitions."

The Falcon project further strengthens VEV's position as one of the UK's leading providers of end-to-end bus electrification, with the company supporting operators nationwide through integrated power infrastructure, charging solutions, smart charging software and ongoing operational support.

New Vehicles Supplied by Alexander Dennis

Falcon was the first independent operator to place an order for Alexander Dennis's next generation Enviro200EV single decker. At 10.9m long, each vehicle seats up to 37

passengers across 31 fixed seats and six tip-ups in two wheelchair bays, flexibly maximising travel opportunities for passengers with reduced mobility and those travelling with pushchairs.

Mark Taylor, Regional Sales Manager for Alexander Dennis, said: *"Today we are celebrating Falcon as the first independent customer for the next-generation Enviro200EV. This is a significant statement of confidence in the product, in electric bus technology, and in the role that independent operators will play in delivering cleaner, quieter and more efficient public transport."*

"The Enviro200 has been the backbone of Falcon's fleet and many other successful bus operations across the country, and it has earned that position because it is practical, dependable and efficient. With the Enviro200EV, we have taken those same strengths and carried them forward into a zero-emission platform designed for the demands of daily service."

As operators continue to transition to zero-emission fleets, projects such as Falcon demonstrate how the right infrastructure can provide a scalable foundation for reliable, efficient electric bus operations. ●

Major Rollout to Deliver One of the UK's Largest On-Street EV Charging Networks

West Northamptonshire is set to deliver one of the UK's largest on-street electric vehicle (EV) charging programmes, with Char.gy appointed to install more than 3,000 charging sockets through the Government's Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) Fund, backed by private investment.

The rollout will improve charging access for residents without off-street parking, with most charge points installed in existing lamp columns to minimise disruption and reduce costs.

Locations have been selected using evidence on local demand, alongside suggestions from residents and parish councils. Installation is expected to begin in mid-2026.

Aviation, Maritime and Decarbonisation Minister Keir Mather said:

"Drivers in West Northamptonshire will soon have thousands more reasons to go electric, with over 3,000 new public charge points rolling out thanks to £2.85 million of government funding."

"We know charging availability is one of the biggest barriers to switching, which is why we're investing more than £600 million to rapidly expand the UK's charging network."

Cllr Nigel Stansfield, Cabinet Member for Environment, Recycling and Waste at West Northamptonshire Council, said:

"This is a transformative investment that will make it easier for residents to choose electric vehicles while helping prepare our communities for growing demand. By working with Char.gy and using existing infrastructure, we're taking a practical step towards a more sustainable West Northamptonshire."

John Lewis, CEO of Char.gy, added:

"This investment will make a real difference for residents without driveways or home chargers. By using existing lamp columns, we're bringing reliable, affordable charging closer to where people live, making the switch to electric vehicles a practical option for more people." ●



The charging infrastructure from commercial e-fleet solutions provider VEV



Spelthorne Direct Services Welcomes Speed and Simplicity of Fleetclear

Spelthorne Direct Services (SDS), a wholly owned subsidiary of Spelthorne Borough Council providing commercial waste management services, has installed Fleetclear camera systems across its fleet and adopted Fleetclear Connect software to simplify footage retrieval, reporting and analysis.

The decision followed ongoing difficulties accessing footage from the company's previous vehicle camera system, which made investigating complaints and insurance claims both time-consuming and resource intensive.

Graham Boswell, Business Development Officer at SDS, explained: "We had an issue accessing footage from our previous camera systems. If a complaint was made against us, for example alleging that we had damaged a vehicle, we would have to physically connect a laptop to the cab and trawl through huge volumes of data to find the relevant footage to send to our insurance company.

"On many occasions, we also experienced technical problems when trying to download the selected footage."

After discovering Fleetclear at an industry event, SDS decided to trial the company's four-camera system on one of its vehicles.

"The clarity of the footage was excellent, but more importantly, I could access it from my laptop while the vehicle was still out on its round," Graham said. "We could view collection rounds in detail and retrieve footage from a specific date and time within minutes."

SDS trialled the system for six months before installing Fleetclear cameras on a second vehicle. As part of a wider programme to digitalise its fleet operations, the organisation has also introduced the web-based Fleetclear Connect platform.

The platform brings information from SDS's vehicle safety systems together within a single management portal, removing the need for manual downloads and simplifying reporting, analysis and day-to-day fleet management.

Graham added: "We are a very happy customer. If we receive a complaint about a missed bin collection or alleged vehicle damage, it takes only a few minutes to investigate and resolve the issue.

"The time we are saving makes a significant difference, and the system itself is much easier to use. Fleetclear's service is also very responsive. If we have any questions or need support, there is always someone at the end



of the phone, and we receive regular visits from Alfie, our account manager."

Following the successful introduction of the system at SDS, Spelthorne Borough Council has confirmed that it will also switch its entire fleet of refuse collection and road sweeper vehicles to Fleetclear.

Jason Maddern, Head of Municipal at Fleetclear, said: "Our HGV and fleet video monitoring solutions camera systems are perfect for complete surveillance and for providing complete peace of mind for commercial operations. I'm delighted that SDS is happy with our products and that our commitment to providing excellent after-sales support has also been recognised. We look forward to developing our relationship with both SDS and Spelthorne District Council."

Why Fleetclear?

With more than 15 years of expertise delivering proven fleet safety solutions, Fleetclear helps organisations operate safely, efficiently and responsibly. Supported by fully qualified in-house engineers, industry-leading after-sales support and comprehensive warranties, Fleetclear is a trusted fleet safety partner. ●

For more information visit: www.fleetclear.com

Superhero Vehicles Bring Food Waste Recycling to Life

A fleet of five brand-new superhero-themed vehicles has arrived at North Warwickshire Borough Council (NWBC) to support its dedicated weekly food waste collection service.

Pupils from local junior schools were invited to design an eco-superhero and create a name for each vehicle. More than 300 entries were received, with three local councillors given the difficult task of selecting the five winning designs.

Local authority fleet wrapping specialist Creative Vehicle Wrapping (CVW) was commissioned to animate and adapt each superhero character before producing and installing the finished vehicle wraps.

Residents across the borough will now be able to spot Avenger Avocado, Eco-Eats, Eco Pickle Power, Super Pineapple and Brock Lee carrying out food waste collections in their communities.

Margaret Bell, Deputy Leader and Chair of the Community and Environment Board at North Warwickshire Borough Council, said: "We are very grateful to CVW for its assistance in bringing the children's superheroes to life and for creating and installing such superb wrap designs.

"The vehicles look fantastic. It is a great way to engage with local



children, raise awareness of the new service and communicate the importance of food waste recycling across the whole community."

CVW provides a complete vehicle wrapping service covering design, printing and installation. The company operates its own fully equipped installation facility and has built a strong reputation for creating high-impact wrap campaigns for commercial and local authority fleets.

CVW has achieved ISO 9001 Quality Management and ISO 14001 Environmental Management certification. ●

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

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Video-Enabled Worker Safety Solution Delivers Complete Driver Protection with Six-Second Response Time

SureCam and Peoplesafe's video-enabled worker safety service has achieved emergency response times more than 150% quicker than standard 999 calls, providing the fastest and most comprehensive driver protection solution currently available to fleet operators.

Following a live trial undertaken in collaboration with Geotab, a global leader in connected vehicle and asset management solutions, the service recorded an average pick-up time of just 6 seconds for all raised alarms that occurred both in and outside the vehicle.

By integrating our video telematics platform with Peoplesafe's Alarm Receiving Centre (ARC), we can provide drivers with a quick and easy way to request assistance in an emergency," explains Sam Footer, Partnership Director at SureCam. "These latest results demonstrate the effectiveness of the solution, which combines rapid response with complete visibility of emergency incidents as they unfold."

The video-enabled worker safety service allows a driver to raise an alarm via an SOS app or device when away from the vehicle or using an in-vehicle panic button when behind the wheel. The ARC verifies each alert received, based on whether it is a pressed panic alarm, fall detection, expired timer or triggered camera event, so it can be handled appropriately. SureCam's cameras also allow ARC controllers to see what has happened at the front, rear or inside of the vehicle, while providing indisputable audio and visual evidence should any matter progress to court.

Peoplesafe's ARC is certified against BS EN 50518:2019 Category 1 and BS 8484:2022, and operated by experienced personal safety specialists. In particular, the BS

8484:2022 certification provides fleet customers with the highest level of police response via a Unique Reference Number (URN). This enables direct access to police control rooms, without the need for a 999 call, and guarantees the fastest possible response in the event of an emergency.

Naz Dossa, CEO of Peoplesafe commented: "We have worked closely with our fleet industry partners to develop a workforce safety solution that leverages the capabilities of fleet and video telematics to provide complete driver protection. Rapid, industry-leading response is an integral part of ensuring the safety and wellbeing of employees driving and working remotely, so we are thrilled by the positive feedback from the live trial."

Aaron Jarvis, Vice President at Geotab added: "Peoplesafe and SureCam have both successfully integrated with MyGeotab, which provides fleet operators with a single, unified view of telematics, video and driver safety. Such a rapid alarm response is a powerful safety outcome mitigating driver risk – and one only possible when the underlying data flows without friction between platforms." ●

Pace Technology Launches Cold Chain Monitoring Platform for Healthcare Fleets

Pace Technology UK has launched a new temperature monitoring platform designed to help healthcare and pharmaceutical fleets strengthen cold chain visibility, compliance and incident response.

Cold Logic brings together live temperature data, vehicle journey information, configurable alerts and compliance reporting within a single platform. It is intended for organisations transporting temperature-sensitive medicines, vaccines and other regulated healthcare products.

The system can integrate with vehicle-

mounted temperature probes, refrigeration units, independent data loggers and API-connected devices. This allows operators to retain existing equipment while gaining a more complete view of temperature-controlled movements across their fleet.

Designed to support the requirements of MHRA Good Distribution Practice, Cold Logic provides monitoring from collection through to final delivery. The platform creates a documented record of each journey, helping operators demonstrate that products have been transported within the required temperature range.

Where a temperature excursion occurs, fleet and quality teams can receive an alert, identify when the incident began and establish how long it lasted. This information can then be used to support investigations, operational reviews and decisions over whether affected products remain suitable for use.

Automated reporting, encrypted data storage, role-based access and controlled

audit trails are intended to reduce the administrative burden associated with regulated transport operations while providing evidence for audits and quality assurance processes.

Operators can also create scheduled or on-demand reports tailored to individual customers, contracts or consignments. GPS data and integrated vehicle cameras can provide further context when an incident is recorded, helping teams understand where and when an event occurred and respond more effectively.

Cold Logic is suitable for pharmaceutical manufacturers, wholesale distributors, hospital pharmacies, NHS logistics providers, clinical trial supply operations and specialist temperature-controlled transport fleets.

By combining fleet, temperature and journey data, the platform is designed to give operators greater oversight of the healthcare cold chain while supporting product quality, regulatory compliance and patient safety. ●

Rising Fuel Costs Highlight the Value of Fleet Data

With fuel remaining one of the largest operating costs for essential service fleets, many operators are looking beyond pump prices and focusing instead on the factors they can control.

Whether operating vans, HGVs, minibuses or specialist vehicles, even small improvements in fuel efficiency can translate into significant savings across larger fleets. While fuel prices continue to fluctuate in response to global events, fleet managers are increasingly turning to connected vehicle data to understand where unnecessary fuel consumption is occurring and, more importantly, why.

For many organisations, fuel represents between a quarter and a third of total fleet operating costs, making it one of the biggest opportunities to improve efficiency without reducing operational capability.

The challenge is that fuel is rarely wasted through one major issue. Instead, costs build gradually through everyday driving habits such as excessive idling, harsh acceleration, speeding, poor anticipation and unnecessary vehicle use. Individually these behaviours may appear insignificant, but multiplied across hundreds of vehicles and thousands of miles they can have a substantial financial impact.

Geoff Cross, Managing Director at Centrad, believes the biggest

opportunity for fleet operators is improving visibility rather than simply collecting more information.

"Ultimately, there is very little operators can do about the price displayed on the forecourt. What they can control is how efficiently that fuel is being used across their own fleet."

"Operators aren't intentionally wasting fuel, but it's often the small day-to-day inefficiencies that go unnoticed. Excessive idling, harsh acceleration, speeding and poor anticipation all increase fuel consumption, particularly across larger fleets."

Historically, identifying these behaviours often relied on manual investigations, driver complaints or analysing telematics reports after an issue had already developed. Today, connected fleet technologies are enabling operators to combine vehicle data with AI-powered camera systems, providing valuable context around how vehicles are being driven and the operational conditions influencing fuel consumption.

Rather than viewing telematics, cameras and vehicle health systems as separate technologies, many fleets are now integrating these sources to gain a broader understanding of driver behaviour, vehicle utilisation, maintenance requirements and operational efficiency.

This additional context allows fleet managers to identify trends that may otherwise remain hidden, helping prioritise driver coaching, improve route planning and reduce unnecessary vehicle wear alongside lowering fuel consumption.

Cross believes this shift is changing the way operators engage with drivers.

"The real value isn't simply collecting more data. It's about turning that data into meaningful insight. Connected video gives operators the context behind every event, allowing them to understand the reasons for fuel inefficient driving rather than making assumptions based on figures alone."

"Instead of using cameras or telematics purely as monitoring tools, operators can use connected insight to coach and support their drivers more effectively."

For essential service fleets, where every vehicle plays a critical operational role, reducing fuel consumption is rarely about a single technology or initiative. Instead, it is the combination of accurate data, informed decision making and positive driver engagement that delivers lasting improvements.

As operating costs continue to rise, the fleets achieving the greatest efficiencies are likely to be those using connected data not simply to monitor performance, but to understand it. ●

For more information visit: <https://centrad.co.uk>



Recent figures from the Institute of the Motor Industry (IMI) have reignited concerns about the slowdown in electric vehicle (EV) technician qualifications at a time when electric vehicle adoption continues to accelerate. However, according to Autotech Training, continued focus should now be placed on making EV skills development more accessible for independent garages and automotive businesses.

With record numbers of used EVs entering the independent aftermarket, Alistair McCrindle, Operations Director at Autotech Training, believes the priority should be removing the practical barriers that prevent workshops from investing in training.

"The industry already knows we need more EV-qualified technicians," said Alistair. "The bigger question is how we make training achievable for busy workshops. Independent garages recognise that electrification is no longer a future consideration, but finding the time, budget and flexibility to develop those

skills can still be a challenge.

"Training should be viewed as an investment in the future of the business, not simply another cost. Our role is to make that investment easier by removing as many of the practical barriers as possible."

In response to the evolving needs of the aftermarket, Autotech Training has developed its EV training programmes around the realities of modern workshop operations, introducing a range of flexible training options designed to make professional development easier to access.

These include a discounted training pathway covering IMI Levels 2, 3 and 4, onsite delivery at customer premises, and the option to undertake training at weekends or during Bank Holidays to minimise disruption to day-to-day business.

Autotech Training has also introduced an alternative route to IMI Level 4 certification, allowing delegates to complete an additional day of practical

learning instead of the traditional 1,000-word written assessment.

"We've looked carefully at the reasons why businesses sometimes delay investing in training," continued Alistair. "Whether it's reducing overall training costs, delivering courses onsite, offering more flexible scheduling or providing alternative assessment routes, every change has been made with one objective in mind – making it easier for businesses to build the skills they need."

"There isn't a single solution to closing the industry's skills gap but making training more practical and accessible is one way we can help the sector continue to build the skilled workforce it needs."

As more electric vehicles move beyond manufacturer warranties and into everyday servicing and repair cycles, the demand for qualified technicians will continue to grow. Ensuring independent workshops have the confidence and capability to maintain these vehicles will be critical to supporting motorists and the wider transition to electrification. ●

Autotech Training has developed flexible Electric and Hybrid Vehicle training programmes designed to make EV skills development more accessible for independent garages and automotive businesses. For more information visit: [autotechtraining.co.uk](https://www.autotechtraining.co.uk)



Geotab Vitality helps Richfords cut fleet collision risk by 22%

Richfords Fire & Flood, a specialist property restoration company delivering fire, flood and accidental damage recovery services across the UK, has reduced predicted fleet collision risk by 22% and achieved a reported return on investment (ROI) of 411% after introducing Geotab Vitality across its vehicle fleet.

Operating from its headquarters in Redruth, Cornwall, with depots in Bracknell, Cullompton and the Midlands, the company's fleet plays a vital role in supporting rapid response teams attending customer sites.

A Geotab customer since 2018, Richfords initially introduced Geotab Vitality through a two-month pilot involving around 20 drivers in October 2025 before rolling the programme out across its entire 53-vehicle fleet in January 2026.

Geotab Vitality integrates with the existing Geotab telematics platform, providing drivers with personalised performance scorecards updated in near real time. The system measures key driving behaviours, including speeding, harsh braking, cornering and acceleration, with drivers progressing through Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum performance levels while earning rewards such as coffee vouchers and retail gift cards.

The pilot delivered immediate results, with participating drivers improving safe

driving behaviours by 53% within the first 30 days. Following the full fleet rollout, Richfords reported a 73% reduction in harsh cornering, alongside reductions of 61% in speeding, 55% in harsh braking and 48% in harsh acceleration.

These improvements contributed to a further 22% reduction in predicted collision risk, measured using Geotab's Predictive Collision Risk algorithm, despite the fleet already performing better than comparable operators.

Sheena Owen, Fleet Manager at Richfords Fire & Flood, said the business wanted to move away from delayed reporting and provide drivers with immediate insight into their own performance.

"Previously, drivers were often only becoming aware of issues weeks after they had occurred, making it difficult to remember the specific incidents and adjust their behaviour straight away. We wanted drivers to have visibility of their own performance in near real time, rather than relying on a manager to highlight what had already happened."

The impact was quickly evident. One driver who had previously featured regularly in speeding reports recorded no speeding incidents during the first month of the programme, while colleagues outside the pilot group actively requested to join after seeing the results.

Philippa Richford, Business Systems Manager at Richfords Fire & Flood, said the wider rollout proved equally straightforward.

"We've introduced systems in the past where we've had to guide people through every step. With Geotab Vitality, drivers were downloading the app and getting started independently from day one. When a rollout is that frictionless, it becomes something drivers take ownership of, rather than something being imposed on them."

Steve Lockington, Chief Executive Officer of Geotab Vitality, said the results highlighted the benefits of giving drivers immediate access to their own performance data.

"Richfords demonstrates what's possible when driver safety is treated as a personal performance conversation rather than simply a compliance exercise. Moving from delayed reporting to putting near real-time data in the hands of the driver fundamentally changes engagement. The sustained reduction in collision risk since the full rollout shows the impact this approach can have."

The results demonstrate how combining connected vehicle technology with driver engagement can deliver measurable improvements in road safety, while reducing operational risk and supporting more efficient fleet management. ●



Essential Fleet Group Launches New Professional Development Guide for the Fleet Sector



Essential Fleet Group is pleased to announce the launch of the Essential Fleet Professional Guide, a new publication dedicated to the people, skills and career pathways that keep fleet operations moving.

Created for fleet and transport professionals working across the public and private sectors, the Guide will bring together career insights, professional development advice and real-world experiences from individuals across the fleet industry, alongside practical operational guidance from industry experts.

The publication will explore the wide range of roles involved in managing safe, compliant and efficient vehicle operations, from fleet managers, transport managers and fleet engineers to compliance specialists, procurement professionals, workshop managers, administrators and operational leaders.

It will also provide valuable insight for people considering a career in fleet, those moving into the sector from another profession and experienced professionals looking to develop their knowledge or progress into more senior roles.

The Guide will also explore what comes next for professionals approaching the end of their full-time fleet careers. Through features on life after fleet, experienced industry figures will share how they have moved into consultancy and mentoring, continuing to pass on the knowledge gained throughout their careers.

The Essential Fleet Professional Guide has been developed in response to the increasing complexity of fleet management and the growing

importance of attracting, developing and retaining skilled professionals.

Today's fleet teams are responsible for far more than vehicle acquisition and maintenance. Their work can encompass driver safety, legal compliance, sustainability, procurement, data analysis, risk management, vehicle technology, operational resilience and the transition to electric vehicles.

However, despite the scale and importance of these responsibilities, there is no single or widely recognised route into many fleet roles. Professionals often enter the industry through different pathways, building their knowledge through operational experience, training, mentoring and professional qualifications.

The Guide aims to reflect that diversity by sharing the experiences of people working at different stages of their careers.

Through in-depth interviews and contributed features, fleet professionals will discuss how they entered the industry, the challenges they have faced, the skills they have developed and the lessons they have learned along the way.

Debbie Cheadle, Publishing Lead at Essential Fleet Group, said:

"Fleet professionals carry an enormous level of responsibility, but the variety and value of the roles within the sector are not always fully recognised."

"The Essential Fleet Professional Guide will put the focus firmly on the people behind fleet operations. It will share practical knowledge, celebrate different career journeys and provide a resource that can support both established professionals and those entering the industry."

"There is no single route into fleet management. Some people begin their careers in workshops, transport offices or operational roles, while others move into fleet from finance, procurement, sustainability, compliance or other sectors."

"We want the Guide to represent those different experiences and demonstrate the range of opportunities available across the profession."

The inaugural edition will include interviews with fleet leaders and industry specialists, alongside features covering career pathways, professional qualifications, leadership, mentoring, technical skills and continuing professional development.

It will also consider some of the biggest workforce challenges facing the sector, including skills shortages, technician recruitment, succession planning and the need to prepare fleet teams for rapidly changing vehicle and operational technologies.

The Essential Fleet Professional Guide will be available as a free digital publication and downloadable PDF. A printed edition will also be available to purchase.

The first Guide is scheduled for publication in December 2026, with additional digital updates planned throughout 2027.

Fleet professionals at every career stage are being invited to contribute their experiences, insights and advice, helping to create a practical and representative resource for the wider industry.

If you would like to participate in our fleet profile interviews or to find out more, visit:
www.essentialfleetprofessional.com or
 email fleet@essentialfleetgroup.co.uk ●



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