



ESSENTIAL FLEET **MANAGER** *Magazine*

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

ISSUE 6
2026



Main Feature:

Fleet Uptime and Incident Response

Special Feature:

When the Road Runs Out

Essential Fleet Manager Magazine

ISSUE 6 (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.



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PUBLISHER

Essential Fleet Manager Magazine

is owned and published by:

Essential Fleet Group Ltd

128 City Road, London. EC1V 2NX.

Company Reg No: 12345195

www.essentialfleetgroup.co.uk

Essential Fleet Group Ltd's other title is:

Essential Fleet Operator

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Managing The Risk Of Serious Collision

In the world of transport, every day comes thick and fast. Vehicles need to be on the road, deliveries need to be made, customers need to be kept happy and the inevitable operational problems need to be dealt with.

Against that backdrop, most responsible fleet operators have systems in place designed to prevent things from going wrong. Driver walk-around checks, defect reporting, licence checks, load security, drivers' hours, mobile phone policies and training are all part of managing a fleet.

But what systems do you have in place for when something does go seriously wrong?

Imagine it is 10.15am on an ordinary working day. The telephone rings in the transport office. It is the police. One of your vehicles has been involved in a serious collision.

What happens next?

Suddenly, the driver may be at the roadside dealing with the police. The manager is trying to establish what has happened. Directors are being informed. The insurer needs to be contacted. The vehicle may be seized and there may be dashcam footage, telematics, tachograph information and company records that need to be identified and preserved.

That is not the time to start writing your serious-collision procedure.

Can We Prevent Serious Collisions?

There is no straightforward answer to that question.

I have spent many years prosecuting and defending cases involving serious injuries and fatalities. There are undoubtedly collisions that could have been prevented. There are also collisions which are genuinely tragic accidents.

We live in a society where, following a serious incident, there is an understandable desire to establish why it happened and who, if anyone, was responsible. When a commercial vehicle is involved, those questions will not necessarily stop with the person sitting behind the wheel.

Questions may also be asked of the business.

What systems were in place? What training had the driver received? What did the business know about the driver and the vehicle? Were concerns identified previously and, if they were, what did management do about them?

This is where one of the principles I regularly use becomes extremely important:

If it isn't written down, it

never happened.

You may have an excellent transport manager who regularly speaks to drivers about road safety. You may have discussed mobile phones, fatigue, speed and drink driving on numerous occasions.

But following a serious collision, saying *"we always tell our drivers about that"* is very different from producing a policy, a training record and evidence demonstrating what the company actually did.

Prevention therefore remains the first line of defence.

Fatigue is a good example. Fleet operators should understand the hours their drivers are working, the shifts they undertake and the amount of driving they complete. Operators working within the operator licensing regime will already recognise the importance of monitoring drivers' hours and working time, but businesses operating vans and other vehicles outside that regime can learn from the same disciplines. A smaller vehicle does not mean a smaller responsibility.

If fatigue becomes an issue following a collision, the important question will not simply be whether the business says it manages fatigue. What do the records show?



"Dashcam footage and telematics may need to be preserved. Decisions made during those first few hours should themselves be recorded."

The same applies to distraction. Most fleets now have some form of mobile phone policy, but having a policy sitting in a folder is not the same as managing the risk. Drivers need to understand what is expected of them and businesses need to consider how phones and other devices are actually used during the working day.

Modern technology has complicated the issue because phones are now used for navigation, deliveries, communication and proof of delivery. The objective should be to remove, as far as reasonably possible, the need for a driver to interact with a device while the vehicle is moving. Whatever system a business adopts, it needs to be practical, communicated to drivers and supported by documented training.

Drugs and alcohol are another obvious risk. Most businesses will say they have zero tolerance towards driving under the influence, but again the question is what sits behind that statement. A documented policy, appropriate testing and regular training can raise awareness amongst

drivers and demonstrate that the business takes the issue seriously. Seasonal reminders can also be particularly valuable at times of the year when social drinking increases.

Then there is speed.

It is very easy to dismiss a few miles per hour as insignificant. A driver is running late. There are deliveries left to complete. Five miles per hour over the limit might not seem particularly important.

But physics tells a different story.

Braking distance increases approximately with the square of speed. Using the Highway Code's typical braking distance of 75 metres at 70 mph as a starting point, at 75 mph the equivalent braking distance would be approximately 86 metres under the same conditions.

That is around 11 metres further for an additional 5 mph.

Five miles per hour sounds insignificant. Another 11 metres of braking distance does not.

Modern telematics also means fleet operators can have far greater visibility

of how vehicles are being driven. That information can be invaluable, but collecting data is only part of the answer. If the system repeatedly identifies speeding and nobody does anything about it, difficult questions may follow after a serious collision.

Monitoring needs to lead to action where action is required, and that action needs to be recorded.

Again: if it isn't written down, it never happened.

When Prevention Fails

You can have good drivers, properly maintained vehicles, regular training and excellent compliance systems and still find yourself dealing with a fatal collision.

That is the uncomfortable reality of operating vehicles on the road.

Prevention is therefore only part of managing the risk. The other part is being prepared for the moment when prevention fails.

The first hour following a serious collision can be critical.

Events move quickly. The driver may be

injured, frightened or in shock. The police may already be investigating the circumstances of the collision. The vehicle may be examined or seized. Witnesses may be identified and electronic evidence may need to be secured. Meanwhile, the telephone is ringing in the transport office and management is trying to establish what has happened.

Without a plan, panic can very quickly replace process.

This is why serious-collision training is so important. It serves two purposes. Firstly, it raises awareness amongst drivers and managers that these incidents can happen. Secondly, it provides a blueprint for what everyone should do when they do happen.

The driver needs to know who to contact and where support will come from. The transport manager needs to understand how the incident should be escalated and what information needs to be preserved. Directors need to know their responsibilities and when insurers, lawyers and other advisers need to become involved.

There also needs to be somebody taking control of the company's response.

Dashcam footage and telematics may need to be preserved. Relevant vehicle, driver and working-time records may need to be identified. Decisions made during those first few hours should themselves be recorded. Communications need to be managed and, above all, the driver needs appropriate support.

A driver involved in a fatal collision may have started the day believing it was going to be an entirely ordinary shift. Within seconds, they can find themselves at the centre of a police investigation while trying to comprehend the fact that somebody has died.

That person should not be left wondering what to do next.

Having a serious-collision procedure is not about teaching somebody

how to avoid responsibility. It is about ensuring that drivers are supported, managers are trained and the business responds calmly and appropriately to an extremely serious situation.

Protect the driver and train the manager properly and there is an inevitable knock-on effect: you protect the business.

Are You Covered?

The purpose of all of this is not to manufacture a defence after something has happened.

It is about being able to demonstrate that the business took road risk seriously before anything happened.

Most responsible fleet operators spend considerable time and money trying to prevent collisions, and rightly so. But there is a gap that is too often overlooked: what happens when prevention fails?

That gap between having good intentions and having a documented, trained and workable serious-collision response is precisely why **FleetGuard+** was developed.

FleetGuard+ is designed to help fleet operators prepare for serious road traffic collisions before they happen, putting systems, procedures and training in place so that drivers, managers and directors understand what is expected of them when it matters most.

Because the worst time to discover that your serious-collision procedure doesn't work is immediately after a serious collision.

So ask yourself this.

If one of your vehicles were involved in a fatal collision tomorrow, would your driver, your transport manager and your directors know what to do?

And, just as importantly, could you prove that they had been trained to do it?

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Fleet Remains the Driving Force Behind UK New Car Market

Fleet has become the dominant force in UK new car registrations, accounting for almost six in every ten vehicles registered so far this year. Latest SMMT and BVRLA figures also reveal the wider influence the sector is having on vehicle demand, leasing and the transition to electric.

More than 809,000 new cars were registered to fleets during the first eight months of 2026, highlighting the extent to which the UK new vehicle market now depends on demand from businesses and organisations.

Latest figures from the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT) show fleet registrations reached 809,511 between January and August, 7.6% higher than during the same period last year and equivalent to 58.3% of the new car market.

Private buyers registered 546,798 vehicles over the same period, representing 39.4% of registrations, while businesses operating fewer than 25 vehicles accounted for a further 32,426.

For vehicle manufacturers, leasing companies and the wider automotive supply chain, the figures illustrate the importance of fleet replacement cycles and purchasing decisions to overall market performance.

Fleet Growth Continues

August maintained the trend, with 53,934 cars registered to fleets – 10.1% more than in August 2025 and equivalent to 57.2% of all registrations during the month.

The overall new car market increased by 13.7% to 94,236 vehicles, marking its ninth consecutive month of growth and the strongest August since the introduction of the twice-yearly number plate change.

Electrified vehicles were another significant contributor. Battery electric vehicle (BEV) registrations increased by 27.7% to 28,063 during August, taking a 29.8% market share. Plug-in hybrids grew by 39.8%, while hybrid registrations increased by 26.3%.

Across the first eight months of the year, 355,746 new BEVs were registered, 28.6% more than during the same period in 2025 and equivalent to more than a quarter of the new car market.

The figures are particularly significant for fleet operators, which have become an important route to market for manufacturers introducing electric models at scale.

Leasing Fleet Passes Two Million

The growing scale of the wider fleet market is also reflected in figures from the British Vehicle Rental and Leasing Association (BVRLA).

Its July 2026 Leasing Outlook reported that the UK vehicle leasing fleet had reached 2,052,673 cars and vans during the first quarter of the year, an increase of 7.2% year-on-year.

Business Contract Hire grew by 6.1%, while salary sacrifice recorded particularly rapid expansion, increasing by

almost 165%.

Electrification is increasingly evident within those fleets. BEVs now account for 48% of the BVRLA car lease fleet, while BVRLA members collectively fund more than one-third of all electric vehicles on UK roads.

BVRLA Chief Executive Toby Poston described the sector as the “engine room” of the UK’s transition to zero-emission road transport.

Growth is not without challenges, however. The BVRLA has highlighted the impact of EV depreciation, manufacturer discounting and policy uncertainty on leasing company profitability. Despite these pressures, it forecasts that the total lease fleet will exceed 2.13 million vehicles by the first quarter of 2027.

Fleet’s Role Continues to Grow

The combined figures provide a clear indication of the position fleet now occupies within the UK automotive market.

Its significance extends beyond the number of vehicles being registered. Fleet replacement cycles are supporting demand for new vehicles, leasing is providing a route into electrification for businesses and drivers, and the sector is helping determine how quickly new technologies reach the road.

With fleet already accounting for 58.3% of new car registrations in 2026, the requirements and purchasing decisions of operators will remain an increasingly important consideration for vehicle manufacturers as the market continues to evolve.●

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The Smarter Way to Keep Essential Service Fleets Moving

Joe Farrugia, Head of Technical Services at Fleet Operations, explains how smarter use of technology and defect management can help essential service fleets to reduce downtime.

For fleet operators across the sector, vehicle availability has a direct impact on frontline delivery.

In housing, utilities, infrastructure or the public sector, vehicles off road can mean missed appointments, delayed repairs or specialist jobs left waiting, putting pressure on drivers, managers and the people relying on them.

Reducing downtime starts with a clear view of what's happening across the fleet, including the condition of vehicles, reported defects, driver risk and incidents.

Technology can help here by removing friction for drivers and giving fleet managers the visibility they need to act more quickly.

Spotting Problems Before They Escalate

Many fleets still rely on fragmented processes to manage key tasks, from vehicle checks and defects to driver compliance and maintenance.

When information is spread across spreadsheets, emails, paper forms and supplier portals, it becomes harder to build a picture of what's happening.

Consequently, a defect might not be escalated quickly enough, a minor repair can become a bigger problem, or concerns about driver behaviour may only become clear after something has gone wrong.

In frontline fleets, where vehicles often carry essential tools and specialist equipment, and are often used intensively, small delays can have a disproportionate impact.

Fleet operators need to know which vehicles are fit for use and whether reported defects are being followed up quickly.

This is where digital fleet platforms can help, bringing daily checks, defect

reporting, maintenance workflows and driver data together, so problems can be managed effectively before they escalate.

They can also create a much stronger audit trail. For fleets operating in safety-critical or highly scrutinised environments, it's important to be able to show that checks have been completed, defects have been reported and appropriate action has been taken. In addition to supporting compliance, this visibility also helps managers identify recurring problems and address them before they affect more vehicles.

From Daily Checks to Fewer Delays

Daily vehicle checks are one of the simplest ways to improve safety and protect uptime.

The process, however, needs to be simple. If checks take too long, drivers are less likely to engage with them properly, and if the results are not captured clearly, fleet managers won't have the visibility they need.

This is where a digital process can help. Drivers can complete walkaround inspections through an app, with

"The most efficient fleets are the ones that can spot problems early, before they cause disruption."



prompts to guide them through each check and defects logged straight away for fleet teams to review.

Fleet Operations' MOVE platform, for example, includes a connected vehicle check and defect management module, enabling drivers to complete digital walkaround inspections and directly flag issues. With up to 50 check points, covering areas such as tyre tread, tyre pressure, wing mirrors and washer fluid, the process is designed to make routine checks more consistent and easier to manage.

For drivers, this makes the process clearer and less reliant on memory or paper-based forms. For fleet teams, meanwhile, it means defects can be seen earlier, prioritised more easily and followed through with a clearer record of what has happened. That is particularly valuable when vehicles are being used by multiple drivers, across different locations or on demanding operational schedules.

Faster Decisions and Fewer Delays

A defect management process only works if issues are acted on quickly. Delays can occur when information has to be manually passed between drivers, fleet teams, maintenance providers and suppliers.

If a defect is reported digitally, it can be escalated to the relevant team sooner. Where systems connect with maintenance suppliers, repairs and maintenance scheduling can also become more efficient.

Managers of essential service fleets need visibility over vehicle availability, reported defects and whether replacements are

needed to protect service delivery. If data points to recurring defects or delays, they can also challenge supplier performance and identify where improvements are needed.

If a vehicle has to come off the road, rental and replacement vehicles can help protect service delivery.

If a vehicle has to come off the road, managers need to understand quickly whether the work can be rescheduled, whether another vehicle in the fleet can be used or whether a suitable replacement is required. Having this information in one place can help avoid last-minute decisions and unnecessary cost.

Connecting Vehicle and Driver Risk

Vehicle condition is only one part of the uptime picture, with driver behaviour and support also having a major impact on incidents and downtime.

A driver involved in repeated low-speed collisions may need practical support or training. Frequent harsh braking, speeding or sharp acceleration may point to a need for coaching, but could also highlight workload pressures or unrealistic scheduling.

Fleet platforms can help teams see the bigger picture by bringing driver and vehicle information together in one place. MOVE, for example, combines details such as licence checks, training, accident history and driving behaviour to help fleets spot where risk may be increasing.

This helps fleets move from a reactive to a more proactive approach. Instead of only responding after an incident, they can identify drivers who may need extra

support or training and intervene sooner.

For fleet managers, the value of data lies in helping them understand what's really happening on the road. It can show where drivers might need support and where operational pressures could be increasing risk.

In many cases, the right response might be additional training or a wider conversation about workload and how vehicles are being used.

Supporting Drivers

Digital systems will only prove effective if they make drivers' lives easier, rather than giving them more admin to deal with.

A driver app can help by putting key information and workflows in one place.

MOVE's driver companion app, for example, gives drivers access to the information and guidance they need to manage their vehicle and carry out routine tasks. It also supports digital mileage capture, expense claims, vehicle checks, defect reporting and incident support.

For drivers working remotely or away from a depot, this can be especially useful – it gives them a simple way to report issues and manage routine fleet processes, without having to rely on separate phone calls or paper forms.

Planning Ahead

With unexpected disruption a part of fleet life, incident response will always be important.

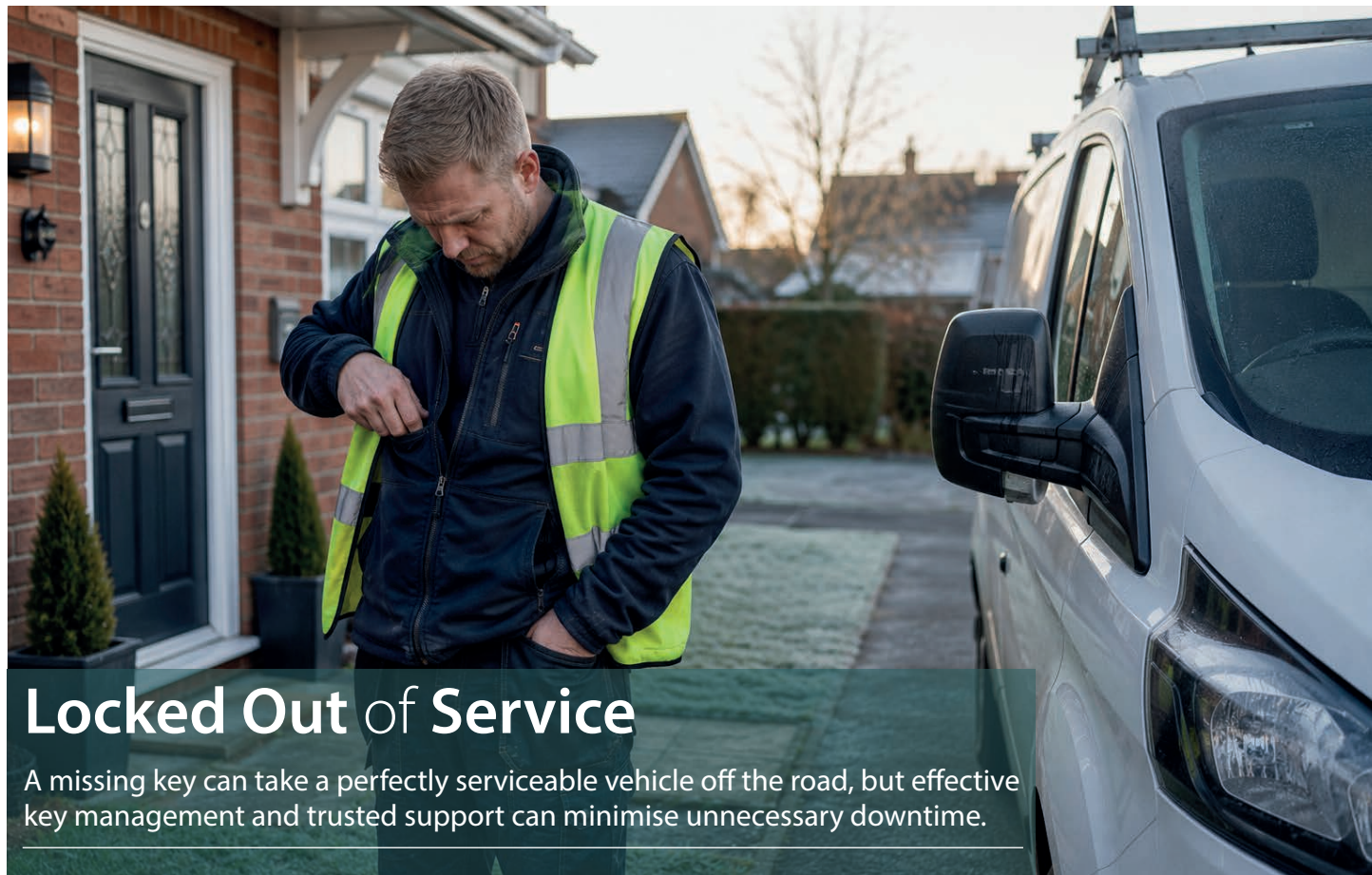
The most efficient fleets, however, are the ones that can spot problems early, before they cause disruption. This means making it easier to report defects, manage maintenance, identify risk and support drivers.

For organisations delivering essential services, this can help prevent missed appointments, reduce downtime and give both drivers and managers a clearer view of what needs to happen next.

Although technology cannot replace experienced decision-making, it can give fleets the insight and control they need to keep essential services moving. ●



To find out more about how Fleet Operations can transform the way you manage your fleet, visit: www.fleetoperations.co.uk



Locked Out of Service

A missing key can take a perfectly serviceable vehicle off the road, but effective key management and trusted support can minimise unnecessary downtime.

Losing a vehicle key might sound like a relatively minor problem. But when that vehicle is due to leave the depot at 6am, has a day's work booked in, or is parked on an operative's driveway miles from the fleet office, it can quickly become an uptime issue.

The vehicle itself may be perfectly serviceable. But without a working key, it isn't going anywhere.

For a busy fleet, the question is therefore not simply how to replace a lost or damaged key. It is how to stop something so small from taking a vehicle out of service for longer than necessary.

Start With the Spare

It sounds obvious, but does every vehicle actually have a spare key and does anyone know where it is?

A spare kept securely in the fleet office can provide a quick solution. A spare that nobody can find, hasn't been returned to the key cupboard, or turns out not to work when it is eventually located isn't much help.

That makes spare keys worth treating in much the same way as other items needed to keep a vehicle operational.

Know which vehicles have them, where they are kept, and who has access to



Mobile key replacement can bring the solution to the vehicle, potentially avoiding recovery and reducing unnecessary downtime.

them. Periodically check that the spare is still there and, importantly, that it actually works.

For a large fleet, this need not become complicated. A straightforward key register and a properly managed key cabinet may be all that is required.

Be Careful What You Put on the Tag

There is another very simple consideration that is easily overlooked: what information is attached to the key?

Putting the vehicle registration number on a key tag certainly makes life easy when somebody is standing in front of a



A controlled key cabinet and clear sign-out process can help fleets keep track of spare keys and identify missing keys quickly.

cupboard containing dozens of keys. Unfortunately, it could also make life easier for somebody who finds or steals one.

If a key is dropped in a car park, left on a counter, or lost while an operative is out working, a registration number immediately identifies the vehicle it belongs to. Depending on where the key was lost, the vehicle itself may not be particularly difficult to find.

A better approach is to use the vehicle's fleet number or another internal asset reference.

Your own team can identify the vehicle from the number, but to anyone else it is simply a number on a tag.

It is a small change, but one that allows keys to remain easy to manage without unnecessarily advertising which vehicle they unlock.

What About Home-Start Drivers?

This is where a good system can suddenly become less straightforward.

If every vehicle starts and ends its day at the depot, retrieving a spare key may be relatively simple. Many fleets, however, have drivers who take vehicles home and travel directly to their first job.

If that driver discovers at 6am that the key is missing, damaged, or simply does not work, the spare could be 50 or 100 miles away.

Someone then has to get it to them.

Before deciding that keeping every spare at head office is the safest solution, it is worth asking what would actually happen if one were needed.

Could somebody deliver it? Is there a local depot? Would another driver have to divert from their work? And how long would the vehicle remain off the road while everyone worked out what to do?

The right answer will depend on the fleet, but it is worth having that answer before somebody loses a key.

Don't Automatically Recover the Vehicle

There was a time when a lost vehicle key could mean recovering the vehicle to a dealer and waiting for a replacement to be ordered and programmed.

That isn't necessarily the case today.

Mobile vehicle-key specialists can often attend the vehicle, cut a replacement and programme it without the vehicle having to go anywhere.

For an operator, that can make a considerable difference.

Recovering a fully loaded working van simply because there is no key can create another layer of disruption. Tools and equipment may be on board, the vehicle may need to be recovered from an operative's home, and a replacement vehicle may then have to be found.

If the key can come to the vehicle instead of the vehicle going to the key, downtime can be reduced considerably.

It is therefore worth knowing in advance what support is available rather than starting the search when a driver is already stranded.

Lost Doesn't Always Mean Lost

Before ordering anything, it is worth establishing exactly what has happened.

Has the entire key disappeared? Is the casing damaged? Has the blade broken? Is the remote no longer working? Or is the problem simply a flat battery in the fob?

Drivers don't need to become vehicle-key experts, but whoever takes the initial call should ask a few basic questions.

The difference could be between a simple fix and the unnecessary arrangement of recovery or replacement.

If a key has genuinely been lost, there is also a security question to consider.

If there is any possibility it has been stolen, or that someone who finds it could identify the vehicle, simply supplying another key may not be enough. Depending on the vehicle and its key system, the missing key may need to be removed from the vehicle's authorised keys.

Again, having access to the right specialist advice can help.

Make It Part of the Uptime Plan

Keys probably aren't near the top of anyone's fleet-risk register. Most of the time, they simply do their job and go unnoticed.

Until one disappears.

For fleets operating hundreds of vehicles, occasional lost, broken or failed keys are almost inevitable. What doesn't have to be inevitable is losing a vehicle for a day – or longer – while someone works out where the spare is, who can replace the key, or how to get the vehicle to a dealer.

A few simple questions can prevent much of that disruption.

Do all vehicles have a working spare? Do you know where those spares are? Are key cupboards controlled? Are keys labelled securely with a fleet number rather than the registration? Do home-start drivers know what to do? And do you already know who to call if a replacement key is needed?

None of this is particularly sophisticated fleet management.

But sometimes keeping a vehicle on the road comes down to something as simple as making sure you can unlock it. ●

Start with the Job, Not the Van

Designed Around Your World:

How **bott** is Putting
Real-World Operations
at the **Heart** of
Vehicle Conversion



Kim Smith,
UK Head of Direct/Fleet Sales at Bott Ltd.

In the second of our series of features focusing on bott's continued innovation and the extension of what is already an unrivalled capability in LCV conversions, Essential Fleet Manager spoke with Head of Direct/Fleet Sales Kim Smith about the first of bott's core competencies: Designed Around Your World.

For bott, the principle goes well beyond selecting the right racking, storage or accessories. It starts with understanding how a fleet actually operates, what its vehicles need to achieve today and how those requirements may change in the future. Only then can the right solution be designed.

That consultative approach can sometimes mean challenging a customer's assumptions about what is possible. It can also reveal opportunities to improve operational effectiveness and efficiency, safety, whole-life costs and employee wellbeing.

Starting With the Operation, Not the Product

There is a natural tendency when replacing vehicles to start with what is already known.

How many vans are required? Which model? What racking was fitted last time? What equipment needs to go inside?

bott deliberately starts somewhere else.

The first stage is about understanding the operation in detail: where the vehicles work, what they carry, how equipment is accessed and what the people using them actually need to achieve during the working day.

It also means looking ahead. A conversion designed solely around today's requirements may be less suitable if working practices or equipment needs change during the vehicle's operational life.

"We need to know what the vehicles are doing, where they operate, what equipment and tools they need to carry and how they are being used. Just as importantly, we want to

understand whether the way drivers or operatives work is likely to change."

That conversation should also involve the drivers, engineers and technicians who will use the vehicles every day.

They experience a vehicle very differently from the people responsible for specifying it. A poorly positioned drawer, equipment that has to be moved to reach something else, or tools stored in the wrong place may seem relatively insignificant during the procurement process. But when those small inconveniences are repeated day after day across a large fleet, they can add up to lost time, unnecessary manual handling and frustration for the people doing the job.

When the Specification Meets the Real World

This is also why a carefully prepared customer specification is not necessarily treated as the finished answer.

Customers may arrive believing they know precisely what the conversion should contain. bott's role is to establish whether that specification will actually work in practice.

Sometimes it won't.

Technical knowledge of the products, vehicle and design software can identify problems before they become part of hundreds of finished vehicles. It can also reveal alternatives that the fleet may not have considered.

Understanding how a vehicle will be used in practice helps bott develop conversions around the customer's operation, equipment and day-to-day requirements.



"Sometimes a customer will ask for something that we know won't work in the way they expect. Our team is fully trained in our products and design software, so we can identify potential problems and specify an alternative, workable solution."

That willingness to challenge an original brief is an important part of the relationship. The objective is not simply to deliver what was originally requested, but to arrive at the right solution for the operation.

Sometimes the best way to establish that is simply to look at the vehicles already doing the job.

Seeing the Operation First-Hand

A site visit can reveal considerably more than a spreadsheet or video call. That is why bott places such importance on visiting customers' operations or inviting them to its own facilities, where requirements can be explored in greater detail.

Existing vehicles show how conversions are really being used. Equipment may have migrated from its intended storage position, racking may be sitting empty and tools may be stored wherever they are easiest to reach.

Sometimes equipment fitted as part of the original conversion has been removed altogether because the operative doesn't need it.

That tells its own story.

"We can find, for example, that a driver has actually removed racking because it isn't needed for their role. Other issues can be down to bad design, and often

that bad design is a result of not having a full understanding of the actual needs of the business before setting out to fit the vehicles."

If employees continually work around a conversion rather than with it, the issue may not be the way they are using the vehicle. The original design may simply not reflect the way the job is actually done.

Poor design can mean wasted space, unnecessary weight, difficult access to equipment and additional time spent finding or moving tools.

It can also introduce unnecessary lifting, reaching and climbing.

For bott, the objective is therefore not simply to make everything fit inside the vehicle. It is to create a working environment that makes the job easier, safer and more efficient.

The People Who Know the Vehicle Best

That makes the operative an important part of the specification process.

"Vehicles are the working environments of operatives. By engaging with them, we can understand their exact needs and, importantly, anything they have found frustrating or difficult in the past."

This first-hand knowledge can expose details that are easily missed during a conventional procurement exercise.

How often is a particular tool used? Which door does the operative normally approach? What needs to be reached

first? Does something heavy have to be lifted from an awkward position? Is equipment being carried simply because it has always been carried?

The answers can materially change the design.

"At the end of the day, it is only the user of the vehicle who can fully appreciate how things work for them in the field."

Understanding those needs does not necessarily mean putting more into the vehicle.

Quite often, it means putting less in.

When Less Can Deliver More

There is an understandable temptation to specify a vehicle for every eventuality.

Fleet vehicles may remain in service for several years, so building in equipment that might be required in future can appear sensible.

But every unnecessary component occupies space, adds weight and consumes payload.

Instead, bott looks at what is genuinely required now, what is likely to change and whether flexibility can be designed into the conversion so additional equipment can be incorporated later.

"That prevents the temptation to overspecify the original requirement."

This can be particularly significant for larger fleets, where specifications have sometimes multiplied over successive replacement cycles.

One recent project provides a striking example.

A fleet of 450 vehicles had accumulated 120 different specifications.

Following detailed consultation and analysis of the actual operational requirements, bott was able to rationalise those down to just 30 specifications, while still accommodating the needs of the different operatives.

The significance goes well beyond reducing the number of specification sheets.

Fewer variations can mean greater consistency, simpler procurement and replacement, common components and easier maintenance. It can also reduce the administrative burden on the fleet team.

But it does not mean creating a one-size-fits-all fleet.

Standardisation Without Losing Flexibility

The starting point is what cannot be compromised.

Health and safety requirements establish the essential elements of the conversion. From there, one or a small number of core specifications can provide the foundation for different operational requirements.

Where genuine differences exist, they can then be accommodated.

This provides the benefits of common components and familiar layouts without

expecting employees performing very different jobs to work from identical vehicles.

It can also make the fleet more adaptable.

Rather than incorporating every conceivable future requirement at the point of conversion, a well-designed standard platform can allow equipment to be added or replaced as the operation evolves.

That becomes increasingly important as fleets move towards new vehicle technologies.

Get Involved Before the Van Arrives

There is, however, a limit to what even the best conversion can achieve if the wrong base vehicle has already been ordered.

Payload, dimensions, powertrain and vehicle specification all influence what is possible once the conversion begins.

There have been occasions where unsuitable base vehicles have arrived and the operator has faced an unenviable choice: reorder and accept a significant delay, or attempt to adapt the conversion around the problem.

Neither is particularly attractive.

"If we can be involved before the base vehicles are chosen, we can ensure that there are no issues along the way."

It represents an important change in thinking.

Instead of selecting a van and subsequently asking what can be fitted

into it, the vehicle and conversion can be considered together around the job they ultimately need to perform.

bott's relationships with vehicle manufacturers also provide visibility of current and forthcoming technical changes, allowing these to be considered during specification rather than discovered further down the process. Electrification makes that increasingly important.

Designing for the Transition to Electric

The move to electric LCVs means that specifications developed around diesel vehicles cannot necessarily be transferred unchanged to their replacements.

Weight becomes particularly important, as does the way equipment is installed.

bott's work with Blue Flame Heating & Electrical provides an example. The company has transitioned around a third of its fleet to EVs, with bott advising on lightweight fittings, no-drill floors and other considerations associated with converting electric vehicles.

The relationship has also extended into the digital environment through bott's Toolkit solution, which gives drivers access to manuals, safety instructions and advice through a QR code while helping to streamline fleet management.

It demonstrates how the definition of a vehicle conversion is becoming broader.

It is no longer simply about what is bolted into the back of a van.



From initial fit-out through to the finished conversion, attention to detail ensures every element is installed to support the vehicle's intended working role.



A well-designed conversion brings together storage, safety and accessibility to create a working environment built around the operative and the job.

One Vehicle, One Conversion Partner

bott's capability now extends across consultation, design, engineering, manufacture, equipment integration and installation.

The acquisition of Van Guard Accessories has widened that further, particularly in relation to vehicle security, access solutions and roof equipment.

"We're now able to advise on vehicle security, access solutions and roof equipment alongside our established conversion expertise, so we are truly a single-source solution."

For a fleet operator, the significance isn't simply the ability to buy more products from one company.

It is the opportunity to reduce complexity.

Large conversion programmes can involve numerous suppliers. When responsibility for different parts of the finished vehicle is divided between several organisations, resolving a problem can become considerably more difficult.

A complete conversion partner offers something potentially more valuable than a single source of supply: a single point of responsibility.

Designed for Today and What Comes Next

The relationship does not end when the converted vehicles leave bott.

Every customer has a dedicated Account Manager, providing continuity as vehicles enter service and operational requirements develop.

That creates an important feedback loop.

By the time the next replacement programme begins, the conversation does not have to start from scratch. There is already knowledge of the operation, the



vehicles that were supplied, what worked particularly well and what might be improved next time.

"We're 'complete' because we are with the customer from the very beginning, providing the best advice based on both a thorough understanding of the operator's business and a knowledge of what is possible right now and in the future."

And that brings the process back to where it began.

Not with a piece of racking.

Not with an accessory.

And, arguably, not even with the vehicle.

It begins with understanding what the fleet needs to achieve and the people who need to achieve it.

That is the thinking behind Designed Around Your World: understand the operation first, challenge assumptions where necessary and then use engineering, design and product expertise to build the vehicle around the job, rather than expecting the job to adapt to the vehicle.

Looking Ahead

Operational Excellence – Delivering Quality at Scale

In the next instalment of our bott series, in the next issue of Essential Fleet Manager, we move from understanding the customer's operation to delivering the finished solution.

We will explore how bott turns an agreed vehicle design into a consistent, high-quality conversion programme, from engineering and manufacturing through to installation, quality control and delivery.

We'll look at what it takes to maintain the same standards across large and complex fleet programmes, and how processes, people and production capability come together to deliver vehicles that are ready to work from day one. ●

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



How **bott** is helping **Nordex Group** create the space needed to **achieve** their **operational targets**

Over the past year, bott has relished the opportunity to support Nordex Group in managing the demands of running an operationally critical fleet across the country. Nordex UK Ltd and Nordex Energy Ireland Ltd play a critical role in the domestic renewable energy market. With 14 service points covering a vast area, from Inverness in the north of Scotland to Bridgend in the south of Wales, the fleet is pivotal in supporting this critical national infrastructure.

With a fleet of 361 commercial vehicles, Mark Beizsley, Fleet Manager UK & Ireland, recently had a conversion requirement to mobilise 65 new Transits and 4x4s. His objective was to find a solution that would meet the needs of his drivers and internal business stakeholders, all of whom had varying views on the bespoke requirements of the conversion.

Mark's challenge was to find a solution flexible enough to meet stakeholder demands, whilst maintaining a high level of quality and consistency and keeping costs to a minimum. Prior to this latest requirement, Mark had struggled to find a converter with the capacity and flexibility to meet his expectations following the challenges of COVID, and felt that market leaders were primarily interested in the largest fleet operators.

Finding the Right Conversion Solution

Upon reviewing the options available, Mark was soon convinced that the bott offering was the solution he needed. He was aware of bott's strong reputation for quality, but was pleasantly surprised to find its proposal 15–20% cheaper than the other options that came close to meeting his needs. He was also delighted to see bott show a

real passion for partnering with him and demonstrate that it had both the capability and capacity to help him achieve his goals. Furthermore, the lighter-weight materials in its product offering gave him back valuable payload. Across the 65 vehicles, Nordex also achieved a saving of £30,000 compared with previous projects with the same requirements delivered by its incumbent supplier.

Nordex quickly bought into the Vario3 product from bott, given its modular capability and the consistency this provided across the operation. bott's globally recognised PX software, coupled with Vario3 functionality, meant that Nordex's bespoke requirements could be built using standard products, minimising design time and fast-tracking the build process. Mark was also impressed by how professionally the project was rolled out, creating an effective and efficient solution that has established an organised in-vehicle workspace.

Preparing for the Move to EVs

Looking ahead, Nordex Group will soon be taking its first steps towards electrification. The team faces extreme environments across a variety of locations, alongside operational demands such as the need for sufficient ground clearance.

Mark does not underestimate the challenge of selecting the right vehicles and conversion strategy to ensure the business can achieve its range and payload priorities whilst making the journey towards an EV future. Mark is currently reviewing the right vehicle mix for his needs, but the decision he has already made is who will support the conversion work.

Given his experience of working with bott on the last 65 vehicles, he is convinced that it is the partner best placed to take on the challenge with him, both as a trusted adviser and an extension of his team.

"We are driven by the challenge of rising to the varying demands and requirements of our customers. Our ongoing focus on driving productivity across our operation and growing our national and local footprint has allowed us to create much greater capacity to meet our customers' needs in a timely manner."

"Working with Mark and the Nordex Group, we have relished finding solutions that support their everyday operational challenges and creating a cross-functional team across our business to design solutions around the unique challenges of their world."

Kim Smith, UK Head of Direct/Fleet Sales at Bott Ltd.

"I have always been impressed by bott's market-leading quality of work, customer service and ability to deliver against requirements. They have proven their ability to service our needs efficiently and effectively, with an obvious growth in their capacity to deliver for a fleet such as ours in recent years."

"Their Vario3 offering has been the perfect solution for my latest tranche of vehicles, and I am looking forward to working with them on our transition to EVs."

Mark Beizsley, Fleet Manager UK & Ireland at Nordex Group.

Explore bott's complete vehicle conversion capabilities: www.bott.uk/solutions/vehicle-conversions ●

76 Suppliers Appointed to £120m Vehicle and Plant Hire Framework

Seventy-six suppliers have secured places on a new £120 million vehicle and plant hire framework designed to help Scottish councils and other public sector organisations source vehicles and specialist equipment.

The fifth generation of Scotland Excel's Vehicle and Plant Hire framework went live on 20 August and is expected to account for around £30 million of public sector spending each year over its four-year term.

The framework will provide council fleet, transport, highways and roads teams with access to a wide range of vehicles and equipment, from cars and commercial vehicles through to refuse collection vehicles, gritters, sweepers and specialist plant.

For local authority fleets, access to hired vehicles and equipment can provide an important means of maintaining operational capacity without permanently increasing fleet size.

Hire can be particularly important where demand fluctuates throughout the year, such as during winter maintenance programmes, seasonal grounds maintenance and highways works. It can also provide additional capacity when vehicles are undergoing maintenance or repair, or when specialist equipment is required for a relatively short period.

12 Vehicle and Plant Categories

The new framework has been divided into 12 lots covering:

- Hire of cars and light vehicles
- Hire of minibuses and buses
- Hire of commercial vehicles
- Hire of refuse collection vehicles
- Hire of sweepers
- Hire of gritters
- Hire of plant: excavation equipment
- Hire of plant: road surfacing



equipment

- Hire of plant: lifting equipment
- Hire of grounds maintenance equipment
- Hire of specialist equipment
- Hire of drainage equipment

The breadth of the framework reflects the range of assets required by local authorities to support essential frontline services.

Refuse collection vehicles, for example, can represent a significant operational challenge when replacement vehicles are required at short notice, while demand for gritters and winter maintenance equipment can be heavily influenced by weather conditions.

Similarly, highways, drainage and grounds maintenance teams can require specialist equipment for individual projects or seasonal programmes where permanent ownership may not represent the most efficient approach.

57 SMEs Secure Framework Places

All 76 suppliers appointed to the framework are based in the UK and Ireland, with SMEs accounting for a significant proportion of those selected.

A total of 57 of the successful suppliers are classified as SMEs, including 14 micro-businesses, providing smaller suppliers with opportunities to compete for public sector contracts during the framework period.

Councillor John Shaw, Convener of Scotland Excel, said: "I welcome the launch of this framework, which will give Scottish councils and other public organisations the support they need to efficiently source the hire of vehicles and plant equipment. This is vital to the effective operation of fleet and roads departments, helping them respond to seasonal or intermittent demand."

"The framework will also bring significant opportunities for the businesses that have secured a place on the framework, including 57 SMEs, with the chance for them to secure a share of the business."

"It is also good news for councils that all suppliers have agreed to fixed pricing for the first 12 months of the framework."

The fixed-price commitment could provide councils with greater cost certainty at a time when fleet and transport departments continue to face pressure on operating budgets.

Supporting Fleet Resilience

Vehicle and plant hire has an increasingly important role within public sector fleet planning, providing an alternative to purchasing additional assets to meet temporary peaks in demand.

It can also support fleet resilience when vehicles are unexpectedly unavailable, helping councils maintain services while repairs, maintenance or replacement programmes are completed.

The inclusion of specialist categories such as refuse vehicles, sweepers, gritters, excavation equipment and drainage equipment means the framework extends well beyond conventional vehicle rental and into assets that can be critical to maintaining essential local services.

Social value requirements also form part of the new agreement. All 76 appointed suppliers have committed to delivering community benefits through the framework, while 64 currently pay the Real Living Wage.

The framework will run for four years and has an estimated total value of £120 million. ●

**SCOTLAND
EXCEL**



DATA: Focus on What Matters

Turning driver behaviour data into targeted risk management

Today, fleets generate an extraordinary amount of information. Telematics can identify speeding, harsh braking and acceleration. Cameras can provide context around incidents and increasingly detect distraction or fatigue. Connected vehicles generate information about condition and performance, while separate systems may hold collision histories, licence information, training records, maintenance data and fuel or energy consumption.

For the Fleet Operator, the challenge is no longer simply obtaining data. It is knowing what deserves attention and what to do about it.

A large fleet can generate hundreds or even thousands of alerts. Expecting someone to review each one is neither realistic nor necessarily useful. More information does not automatically lead to better decisions and, if genuinely important events become buried amongst routine notifications, too much data can actually make effective risk management more difficult.

The solution is not another dashboard.

It is finding a way to turn large volumes of information into a relatively small number of meaningful actions.

A practical approach can be built around five stages:

DATA ⇒ PATTERN ⇒ PRIORITY ⇒ ACTION ⇒ OUTCOME

DATA ⇒ DECIDE WHAT MATTERS

Just because something can be measured does not mean it needs the same level of attention as everything else.

The starting point should therefore be identifying the behaviours and risks that genuinely matter to the organisation.

These could include speeding, mobile phone use or distraction, fatigue, close following, seatbelt non-compliance, repeated harsh braking or acceleration, collisions and near misses.

The priorities will differ between fleets.

An organisation operating predominantly in busy urban environments may have different concerns from one whose drivers regularly travel long motorway distances. Likewise, vehicles operating in construction, utilities or remote locations may present different risks from a conventional car fleet.

The important point is that the organisation should determine what matters, rather than allowing the available technology to determine what gets monitored.

Once those priorities have been established, the volume of information requiring attention can immediately begin to reduce.

PATTERN ⇒ LOOK FOR PATTERNS, NOT JUST EVENTS

One of the dangers of driver monitoring

is treating every alert as evidence of poor driving.

It isn't.

A harsh braking event could indicate that a driver was travelling too quickly or following another vehicle too closely. It could equally demonstrate that they responded correctly when a pedestrian stepped into the road.

An isolated event therefore tells a Fleet Manager relatively little without context.

Patterns are more useful.

Repeated speeding, frequent harsh braking, recurring close-following alerts or a combination of different behaviours may begin to indicate that risk is increasing.

Changes over time can be particularly revealing.

Consider a driver who has historically demonstrated consistently low-risk behaviour but begins generating increasing numbers of speeding, braking and distraction alerts.

Their overall driver score might still appear acceptable, but the direction of travel could be more significant than the score itself.

Something has changed.

That is the point at which data becomes useful, not because it provides an automatic judgement about the driver, but because it tells the Fleet Manager where to look.

PRIORITY⇒PRIORITISE WHAT NEEDS ATTENTION**Not all alerts carry the same significance.**

A low-level acceleration event should not necessarily receive the same attention as repeated mobile phone use, fatigue warnings or extreme speeding.

Fleets can therefore benefit from creating a simple hierarchy.

HIGH PRIORITY – ACT NOW

Behaviours presenting an immediate or potentially serious safety risk. These may require rapid review and intervention.

Examples could include mobile phone use or distraction, fatigue or inattention, extreme speeding, high-severity events or collisions and seatbelt non-compliance.

MEDIUM PRIORITY – LOOK CLOSER

Repeated behaviours or combinations of events that suggest risk may be increasing.

Examples could include repeated speeding, recurring harsh braking or acceleration, close following or harsh cornering.

LOW PRIORITY – KEEP UNDER REVIEW

Isolated, relatively minor events that can be recorded and monitored for repetition.

Examples could include a minor speed threshold breach, an isolated harsh event, route deviation or a small change in fuel or energy consumption.

The purpose isn't to disregard lower-level information. It is to stop hundreds of relatively minor notifications from obscuring the handful of events that genuinely require a Fleet Manager's attention.

ACTION⇒UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT – THEN ACT

Identifying a priority driver or behaviour is only the beginning.

Data can tell a Fleet Manager what happened. It cannot always explain why.

Before action is taken, context needs to be considered.

Where did the event occur? What were the road and traffic conditions? Was the employee driving an unfamiliar vehicle? Had their route or workload changed? Were they under unusual time pressure? What does available camera footage show?

This is also where driver engagement becomes important.

Repeated speeding may indicate poor behaviour, but it could also expose unrealistic journey schedules.

Increasing fatigue alerts could raise questions about working hours or workload.

Repeated harsh braking across several drivers might reveal a difficult route, location or operational problem rather than an issue with individual employees.

The appropriate response should therefore depend on what the investigation reveals.

For a minor issue, continued monitoring may be sufficient.

Another driver might benefit from a conversation or targeted coaching. A specific skills gap could require additional training, while a serious or repeated safety issue may need to follow the organisation's established escalation procedures.

The key is to create a clear link between information and action.

Otherwise, the organisation is simply collecting data.

WHERE DOES AI FIT?

The greatest value of artificial intelligence may not be generating more alerts. It may be reducing the number a Fleet Manager needs to see.

AI and automated analytics can potentially identify unusual behaviour, recognise emerging patterns and bring combinations of risk factors to the surface.

Instead of presenting a Fleet Operator with hundreds of individual braking, speeding and camera events, a system might identify that a previously low-risk driver has demonstrated a significant increase in several risk behaviours during the past three weeks.

That is considerably more useful.

Technology performs the filtering. The Fleet Manager provides the judgement.

OUTCOME⇒ CHECK WHETHER IT WORKED

Taking action should not be the end of the process.

If **data** identifies a potential problem and the organisation intervenes, the same information can be used to determine whether that intervention was successful.

If a **driver** receives coaching following repeated speeding events, did those events subsequently reduce?

If **training** was provided to address close following or harsh braking, did behaviour improve?

If **journey** schedules were changed because fatigue or speeding data suggested excessive operational pressure, did fleet risk subsequently fall?

This **final** stage is important because it changes what the organisation measures.

Instead of reporting simply that ten drivers received training, the more useful question is: did the training make a difference?

That moves the focus away from activity and towards outcomes.

The objective is not simply to demonstrate that an intervention took place. It is to establish whether risk reduced as a result – and, if it didn't, to decide what needs to happen next.

LESS DATA, BETTER INFORMATION

The amount of fleet information available is only going to increase.

Connected vehicles, cameras, telematics and AI-enabled systems will continue to provide Fleet Managers with greater visibility of vehicles and drivers.

But the answer cannot be to expect fleet professionals to spend increasing amounts of their working day looking at dashboards.

Technology should do the heavy lifting.

It should filter routine information, identify exceptions and patterns, highlight changes in behaviour and bring the most important issues to the surface.

The Fleet Manager can then concentrate on the part that technology cannot perform alone: understanding the circumstances, engaging with drivers, questioning working practices and deciding what should happen next.

Ultimately, successful driver monitoring shouldn't be measured by the amount of data a fleet collects.

It should be measured by how effectively that data helps the organisation identify risk, take appropriate action and achieve a better outcome. ●



What connects our customers is not their fleet size, it's their operating environment.

Robert Fountain, Managing Director, Fleet Focus

BEYOND THE CAMERA

TURNING FLEET DATA INTO SAFETY, EVIDENCE AND ACTION

Cameras are standard kit on most fleets now. Getting them to earn their keep – and keeping the data they generate on the right side of the law – is where it becomes more complicated.

Fleet Focus has been supplying and supporting this technology since 2009, combining cameras with telematics, tracking, tachograph systems and AI driver monitoring. We spoke to Managing Director Robert Fountain about specification, evidence, data protection and what fleets still get wrong.

Q: Could you tell us about Fleet Focus and the types of fleets that you work with currently?

We started in 2009, at a point when a vehicle camera was little more than an in-cab accident recorder. The business has grown alongside the technology, and today we develop and support cameras, tracking, driver safety, compliance information and asset visibility, brought together in one user-friendly platform.

Our customers range from small businesses to national fleets running several hundred vehicles. Sector-wise, we are strongest in general haulage, storage and distribution, construction, concrete and tipper work, waste and recycling, quarrying and aggregates, vehicle recovery, and temperature-controlled and grocery distribution. We also work with plant and specialist equipment operators. What connects them is not fleet size,

it is operating environment. These are vehicles working in tight urban or site environments, sharing space with vulnerable road users and other vehicles, as well as undertaking repetitive long journeys where fatigue, boredom and distraction are a major concern.

Those operators need safety and compliance data alongside incident evidence, and they need it quickly. So, we take each sector on its own terms and supply a tailored service rather than selling a one-size-fits-all package.

Q: What have been the major advancements in vehicle camera technology over the last decade and how has Fleet Focus ensured that it remains at the forefront?

I would describe it as three distinct phases.

Recording. Footage sat on a storage card in the vehicle and somebody had

to physically retrieve it. Usually, that meant waiting until the vehicle came back to base. By then, it had often been overwritten or, in some cases, never recorded at all.

Connectivity. Cloud platforms have advanced, which means footage can now be uploaded from a vehicle remotely, in minutes rather than days, by authorised users who could not access the vehicle. That single change transformed the value of the technology because, in insurance claims, speed of FNOL is leverage.

Intelligence, which is where we are now, is an area that is rapidly evolving. AI processing on local hardware devices (Edge AI) and in the cloud helps us to better understand risky driving behaviours and accurately identify microsleeps, distraction, mobile phone use, smoking and much more. It can warn the driver in the cab at the moment it matters and report dangerous habits to

managers for use in safety monitoring and coaching.

Alongside that, we have seen genuine improvements in camera and storage technologies, with better-quality footage stored for longer than was previously possible. Media enrichment and closer integration with telematics, tachograph data and compliance systems are making real differences to fleet operators.

As for staying at the forefront, our industry is moving faster than ever before. We work closely with our customers, technology partners and in-house development teams to continuously improve our solutions and deliver hardware and software updates that genuinely benefit our users and improve driver safety.

Q: Before recommending a solution, how do you work with a fleet to understand its operational, safety, financial and compliance requirements?

We start with the operation, not the product, and that normally means going to see the client.

What does the site actually look like? Where do the manoeuvres that cause damage happen? What does the claims history say about them as a business? Has the insurer asked for anything specific? What are the customer's key objectives – reducing accidents, improving efficiency, reducing compliance workload, etc.?

Then we take the four objectives

separately, because they are not the same thing. Safety is preventing the incident. Operational is the day-to-day running of the fleet and, importantly, who is going to use this system every morning. Financial is claims, insurance premiums, downtime and fuel or EV costs. Legal is evidence and includes the collection and use of data.

Only then do we specify. Sometimes that means fewer cameras than the operator expected, and we will say so. A specification nobody uses is a wasted investment.

The question that catches most people out is the legal one – and it is often the one that comes last. What happens to the video footage once it's recorded, stored and now exists? Who sees it? How long is it kept? What does it get used for?

All of this helps us shape how we configure the platform for the client and is just as important as the hardware, which shapes what gets recorded.

Q: Fleet Focus supplies a complete package covering cameras, telematics, tracking, tachographs and other safety and compliance solutions. How important is that single source of supply and responsibility?

Enormously, and operators who have done it the other way will tell you why.

Cameras from one supplier, tracking from another, tacho analysis from a third, and you have three logins, three contracts, three renewal dates and three support numbers. When something stops working, each one points at the other two. Meanwhile, the transport manager is the one being asked to answer an insurer or a solicitor.

A single source means one specification, designed as a whole. One platform, so vehicle location, driver behaviour, camera footage and tachograph data sit side by side rather than in three separate systems. And one company carrying responsibility for the outcome.

There is a compliance dimension people miss, too. If your data is scattered across three systems owned by three companies, answering a subject access request inside the statutory timescale becomes very difficult indeed. Integration is not just a convenience, it is part of being able to demonstrate control of your own data.

Q: How do you help fleets ensure footage is of sufficient quality to support an insurance claim or defend a legal position?

Quality is decided long before the incident happens, and it comes down to specification and installation as much as to the camera itself.

Resolution and frame rate matter. So does the choice of lens, camera position and angle. A camera pointing a few degrees off will produce footage that looks perfectly good until the day you need to read a registration plate.

We also look at low-light and glare performance, at nearside coverage because that is where a large proportion of claims originate, and at whether the footage carries synchronised speed, location and metadata. That context is what turns a video clip into evidence.

Then there is continuity: an unbroken date and time record, unedited and exported in a form an insurer or a court will accept.



Footage and context are what turn a video clip into evidence that can be used to support an insurance claim or legal position.



And storage, which is where most fleets are more exposed than they realise. We specify industrial-grade cards built for constant overwriting and the platform monitors card health remotely using proprietary AI technology.

Buy the wrong storage drive or card and it can corrupt without anybody knowing because, on the surface, everything is still recording. The fleet finds out on the one day it needs the footage most.

Q: Memory card capacity, footage retention and access can all create challenges. How do you guide operators so footage is securely retained, available when needed and managed compliantly?

Start with how much footage you genuinely need to hold, because most operators overestimate. Card capacity and system configuration decide how many hours you retain before the system starts overwriting, so the specification has to follow the retention decision rather than the other way round.

Work out the period you can actually legally justify, document why, then configure the system to hold that and no more. Thirty days is a reasonable and defensible starting point for general footage. Anything longer needs a specific reason, an open claim or a live investigation and it should be the exception rather than simply the default position.

Event footage is different. That should upload automatically, so the clips that matter are off the vehicle and secured in the cloud within minutes.

On access, role-based permissions are very important, so people see what their job requires and nothing more, with an audit trail showing who viewed, downloaded or exported what. That trail is what allows an operator to demonstrate control if they are ever asked by the ICO.

And there needs to be a documented process for requests, whether they come from an insurer, a solicitor, the police or a driver.

What there should never be is footage going onto somebody's personal phone and round the depot on a messaging app. It happens far more than people admit.

Q: You carried out audits looking at how fleets handle camera and telematics data. What did they reveal, and how did they change your solutions and your advice?

The headline findings were uncomfortable. Every fleet we audited fell short somewhere.

The gaps were remarkably consistent. No Data Protection Impact Assessment for driver-facing cameras, which is the assessment you are expected to have completed before you fit them. No written record of the lawful basis for processing the data. No privacy notice that had ever reached a driver, or one buried in a handbook nobody had opened since induction. No defined retention period, so footage was either kept indefinitely or overwritten unpredictably. And logins that gave anybody access to everything.

I want to be clear that this was not carelessness. In almost every case, the operator believed the responsibility sat with the technology supplier or assumed that buying a reputable system meant compliance came with it.

It does not. The operator is the data controller.

It changed two things for us. Our default configurations, so retention periods, access levels and audit logging are set correctly on day one rather than left open. And our handover process, which now starts with the data questions instead of finishing with them.

We would far rather have an awkward conversation at specification stage than have to address those issues retrospectively two years later.

Q: Fleet Focus is planning 'The Cab, the Camera and the Law', bringing together an ICO officer, a barrister and a data protection specialist. How important is it that operators understand GDPR?

It is essential because the legal responsibility sits with the operator and cannot be contracted away to a supplier.

I should be equally clear about where we stand. We are not data protection lawyers and we do not claim to be. We are a technology company that has taken the trouble to understand the obligations attached to the data our systems create because our customers were asking questions nobody was answering properly.

Which is exactly why it is structured the way it is, and why we are running it early in the new year. Rather than us offering opinions, we are putting an officer from the Information Commissioner's Office, a barrister and a data protection specialist

in front of operators and letting them ask directly.

The questions are always practical. Can I use footage in a disciplinary hearing? Do I need the driver's consent, and is consent even the right basis when I employ them? What am I obliged to tell drivers before I fit a driver-facing camera? How long can I keep footage? What do I do when a driver asks for everything we hold on them?

Those are not abstract legal points. They are Monday morning questions, and operators deserve authoritative answers to them.

Q: What are the main oversights and misunderstandings around the storage and use of data, and what are the common fears among fleet managers and drivers?

The biggest one I have already touched on. Compliance does not come bundled with the hardware.

After that, the recurring ones are relying on driver consent as the lawful basis, when the imbalance in an employment relationship makes consent very hard to lean on; keeping footage indefinitely on the basis that it might be useful one day; leaving access wide open across the transport office; and using audio recording or live-streaming capabilities without ever considering whether it can be justified.

The fears run in both directions. Fleet managers worry about getting it wrong, about an ICO complaint and about being cast as the person who put a camera in a driver's face. Drivers worry the system exists to catch them out, that footage will be trawled for reasons to discipline them and that one bad day will follow them around permanently.

Both fears have the same answer, which is transparency. Tell drivers what is recorded, why, who can see it and how long it is kept. Involve them before installation rather than presenting it as a decision already made.

And use the output for coaching rather than punishment. We have seen some great examples of this in our customer fleets.

Where operators do that, the objections fade quickly. One of our customers, James

Welham, Transport Manager at SRC Group, put it better than we could:

"The drivers took it in their stride, and the drop in alerts and events and therefore incidents proved it!"

Q: How does Fleet Focus support customers beyond supplying the technology?

The installation is the beginning of the relationship, not the end of it.

Fitment is project-managed nationwide so vehicles are off the road for the shortest possible time, and we plan around the operation rather than expecting the operation to plan around us.

Then we train the people who will actually use the system every day, and we come back and do it again when staff change, because systems fail through misuse far more often than through fault.

We provide guidance and templates covering driver communication, policy and the documentation operators are expected to hold. We run toolbox talks every few months with an invited guest speaker and a small group of fleet managers, and those are as valuable for what operators learn from each other as for anything we contribute.

We also review the data with customers rather than leaving them to interpret it alone, because a platform full of alerts that nobody acts on achieves nothing.

Our support desk is UK-based and we work closely with our customers to deliver great support when they need us and keep their systems operational. When a vehicle is involved in an incident, an automated ticketing system or chatbot is not what an operator needs.

The last part, and the one I would defend most strongly, is honesty. We do not take chances with fleet safety or our customers' reputations. We ensure our systems are fully compliant and fit for commercial use.

Q: You have introduced low-cost, simple-to-fit Bluetooth Low Energy asset tracking. How does this go beyond stolen assets and into utilisation?

The tags cost very little, need no wiring, no SIM and no power connection, which is what makes it economic to tag things that were never worth tracking

Asset tracking gives operators greater visibility of vehicles, plant and equipment, helping identify underused assets and inform purchasing and hire decisions.



individually before: trailers, plant, cages, tools, generators, containers and returnable packaging.

Theft is the obvious application, and it works. Utilisation is the more interesting one.

Put every asset on a map and you very quickly discover how many of them are doing nothing. Kit sitting on a site for weeks after the job finished. Equipment nobody can find, so a replacement gets hired. Assets that are notionally in the fleet but have not moved in six months.

That changes purchasing and hire decisions immediately.

We had an enquiry from a grower delivering produce in large returnable crates who was losing around 80% of them and had no idea where they were going. That is not a theft problem, it is a visibility problem, and it was costing them a fortune in replacements.

It also supports inspection and service scheduling because you can only maintain an asset you can find.

Q: How has AI affected the capabilities of video technology and telematics, and where does it go next?

In my opinion, AI is a step change in fleet safety and reliability and has moved the technology from recording or reporting what happened to preventing it happening in the first place. That is the fundamental shift.

A camera used to give you evidence after an incident. An AI system monitors safety continuously and intervenes in the moment, in the cab, while the driver can still do something about it.

Vehicle diagnostics used to report fault codes and engine performance. An AI

system interprets that data and gives fleet managers specific actions.

The numbers make the case. One customer recorded 50 microsleeps, 116 near misses and 76 averted breakdowns in a single month, with an insurance saving of £126,000 and claims reduced by up to 46%. Every one of those was an incident that did not happen.

The other benefit, which gets far less attention, is filtering. Earlier systems used to bury a transport manager in hundreds of alerts every day. AI now helps us separate the significant from the routine, so the manager reviews the handful of events that genuinely need attention rather than scrolling through hundreds.

Looking forward, three things. Better contextual understanding, so the system more accurately distinguishes dangerous behaviors from repetitive driver traits, which will mean fewer false positives.

Closer links between vehicle data and predictive maintenance, because breakdowns very rarely happen without warning.

And deeper integration with insurers, where verified data starts to influence premiums directly.

One caution. The more a system can infer about an individual driver, the more carefully that data has to be governed.

The technology will keep advancing quickly. The responsibility attached to it advances with it, and operators need to keep pace with both.

Ultimately, our main drive at Fleet Focus is that, simply, we are here to help.●

**Fleet
Focus**

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



THE KEY TO BUSINESS CONTINUITY

GREEN & ALTERNATE PARTS

When it comes to reducing vehicle downtime, used spare parts are becoming an essential component of modern repair strategies.

When sourced and fitted correctly, green and alternate parts are proving to be valuable alternatives to new components, helping fleets shorten repair cycle times while reducing costs and carbon emissions.

WHAT ARE GREEN & ALTERNATE PARTS?

Green parts, also known as recycled, salvaged, reclaimed or used parts, are components removed from end-of-life vehicles and reused in another vehicle rather than being discarded. Alternate parts are non-OEM aftermarket components manufactured as replacements for original parts.

At FMG, we have been offering safely salvaged and reusable green parts and alternate parts as an option for more than two years. During that time, green and alternate parts have helped overcome industry-wide parts shortages and reduced the impact of supply chain delays on vehicle repairs.



One of the most significant benefits is their ability to prevent vehicles from being declared beyond economical repair. In cases where parts delays have persisted, the sourcing of green and alternate parts has enabled repairs to be completed that may otherwise have resulted in a total loss decision.

This not only keeps vehicles on the road but also helps fleets avoid extended vehicle-off-road (VOR) periods and the associated costs.

SOURCING GREEN PARTS

Availability has improved considerably in recent years, driven by investment in vehicle recycling operations and digital sourcing platforms. Green and alternate parts are now widely accessible for ICE (internal combustion engine) vehicles and an increasing number of electric vehicle (EV) models.

While availability can vary depending on vehicle age, specification and demand, the overall supply picture is stronger than ever.

At FMG, we work with trusted partners including LKQ SYNETIQ, GPS and LKQ Euro Car Parts, whose robust processes support quality and traceability. These suppliers offer services such as VIN-matched parts, carbon reporting and integration with repair estimating systems, helping to ensure a seamless and efficient repair process.

When presenting repair options to customers, we explain our stringent sourcing standards and established network of suppliers and repair partners. This helps reassure both fleet managers and drivers that the quality of repair will not be compromised.

Where customer policies allow, it is common for a repair to involve a combination of OEM, green and alternate parts. Modern estimating platforms enable engineers to compare these options in real time, supporting faster decision-making and more efficient repair planning.

ENSURING A QUALITY REPAIR

Green parts are graded according to their cosmetic and mechanical condition, typically from Grade A to Grade D. Grading considers factors such as the condition of the component and the mileage of the donor vehicle.

At FMG, our criteria are intentionally stringent. We only source Grade A parts, which typically require minimal preparation before installation. If excessive time is spent repairing, painting or preparing a component, much of the financial benefit can quickly be eroded.

For the same reason, green parts are generally limited to non-safety-critical, bolt-on components such as doors, wings, lamps, bumpers and trim.

We insist on full parts documentation to preserve repair guarantees and follow a rigorous parts identification process to ensure components are appropriate for the vehicle being repaired.

Quality remains our priority. The use of green parts does not alter the standards we expect from the repair process, nor does it impact the guarantee provided on the completed repair.

WHEN SHOULD GREEN & ALTERNATE PARTS BE USED?

For green and alternate parts to deliver maximum benefit, the supply process must operate smoothly and efficiently.

At FMG, the process is fully integrated into our repair management operation. Each customer's green and alternate parts strategy is embedded within their repair instructions and communicated across our repair network, ensuring there is no uncertainty around which parts can be used.

This automated approach removes delays, supports repairers in making faster decisions and helps vehicles return to the road sooner. For many fleets, it has become an effective solution to ongoing parts availability challenges.

THE BENEFITS FOR FLEETS

Our Claims Performance Team is focused on identifying practical solutions to common repair challenges, including ongoing parts delays. By proactively sourcing in-demand components and supporting repairers with alternative parts options, the team helps minimise repair delays, reduce VOR costs and keep vehicles operational.

Alongside reducing repair costs, green and alternate parts can help fleets improve sustainability performance by extending the life of existing vehicle components and reducing the demand for newly manufactured parts. Combined with shorter repair times and improved vehicle availability, they are increasingly becoming a valuable part of a modern fleet repair strategy.

KEY BENEFITS OF GREEN & ALTERNATE PARTS

- Reduced vehicle downtime
- Lower repair costs
- Reduced vehicle off road (VOR) expenses
- Improved repair cycle times
- Reduced carbon emissions
- Prevention of unnecessary total loss decisions
- Greater flexibility during parts shortages
- No compromise on repair quality when sourced correctly

FMG

THINKING AHEAD



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Managing SMR across a Mixed Fleet

A successful SMR strategy is not just about maintaining vehicles – it is about keeping the assets the operation depends on safe, compliant and available when they are needed.

Managing servicing, maintenance and repair across a mixed fleet is never straightforward. Cars, vans, HGVs, plant and specialist vehicles can have very different maintenance requirements, operating patterns and consequences when something goes wrong.

The challenge for Fleet Operators is therefore not simply creating a maintenance schedule. It is developing an SMR strategy that keeps every type of asset safe, compliant and operationally available.

Start by Segmenting the Fleet

Applying a single maintenance policy across an entire mixed fleet is rarely practical. Different vehicles have different servicing requirements, while intensive-use assets may require greater attention than a standard schedule suggests.

A practical starting point is to segment the fleet according to its maintenance requirements. Vehicle type is an obvious consideration, but duty cycle, mileage or operating hours, operational environment, age, criticality and the consequences of failure should also influence the maintenance regime.

For specialist vehicles, consider the complete operational asset. A van may start and drive perfectly but still be unusable because an essential piece of fitted equipment has failed. Lifts, cranes, access systems, hydraulics, generators, compressors, refrigeration equipment and specialist bodies can all have their own servicing and inspection requirements.

This creates an important distinction between vehicle availability and operational availability. An asset should only be considered available when everything required for it to perform its intended function is ready for use.

Once these differences are understood, Fleet Operators can determine the most suitable maintenance approach for each group.

Choose the Right Maintenance Regime

Once the fleet has been segmented, consider what should trigger maintenance for each group. The approach will depend on how the asset is used, its complexity and the consequences of failure.

Preventive Maintenance will remain appropriate for many road-going vehicles and assets with relatively standard

equipment. Servicing, inspections and maintenance are carried out at predetermined time, mileage or operating-hour intervals.

Predictive Maintenance can add another layer where vehicle and equipment data is available. Telematics, onboard diagnostics, sensors and condition monitoring can identify deterioration or developing faults, allowing intervention before they result in failure or unexpected downtime.

Reactive Maintenance may have a place for low-cost, non-safety-critical components where failure has little operational impact. It is far less appropriate where failure could compromise safety or compliance, or take a critical asset out of service.

In practice, the answer may be a combination of all three. The objective is to apply the right level of intervention according to the asset, its use and the operational risk associated with failure.

Understand Operational Asset Value

The financial value of a vehicle does not necessarily reflect its value to the operation.

A relatively inexpensive van carrying specialist equipment could be

"An asset should only be considered available when everything required for it to perform its intended function is ready for use."

considerably more difficult to replace than a higher-value passenger car. Similarly, losing a refuse collection vehicle, accessible minibus, mobile workshop or specialist highways vehicle could immediately affect service delivery.

When planning SMR, Fleet Operators should therefore consider how operationally critical each asset is.

Which vehicles can easily be substituted?
Which require specialist replacement hire?
Which carry unique equipment?
Which would prevent a team from completing its work if unavailable?

Understanding this operational value can help determine when maintenance is scheduled, what contingency is required and how quickly defects need to be resolved.

Plan Maintenance to Avoid Peak Demand

Wherever possible, planned maintenance should take account of when an asset is most and least needed.

This requires coordination between fleet and operational teams, with sufficient notice to release vehicles and an understanding of peak-demand periods. These may be predictable seasonal pressures or vary by service, location or time of day.

Once an asset is scheduled to be off the road, make that downtime count. Approaching maintenance requirements, outstanding defects, tyres, recalls and other work can potentially be coordinated within the same workshop visit.

The aim is to maintain compliance and reliability while minimising disruption and avoiding taking the same asset out of service repeatedly.

Use Defects to Identify Patterns

Pre-use checks and defect reporting should form an important part of the wider SMR picture. Their value lies not only in identifying individual faults, but in using the information collectively.

Repeated defects affecting a particular vehicle, model, component or operational group can highlight wider issues with specification, duty cycle, operating environment or maintenance requirements.

Tracking trends can help Fleet Operators refine maintenance schedules, identify recurring reliability issues and inform future specification and replacement decisions.

For specialist assets, defect reporting should extend beyond the base vehicle to the equipment required for it to perform its role.

Used effectively, defect data turns the pre-use check from a daily requirement into a valuable source of SMR intelligence.

Finding the Right Suppliers Has to Form Part of the Strategy

Few mixed fleets will be able to send every asset to the same maintenance provider. Cars and vans may be supported through dealer or national networks, while HGVs, plant and specialist vehicles can require different expertise.

Your SMR strategy may therefore need different suppliers for different requirements. The priority is finding providers that understand the assets, their operating environment and the importance of keeping them available.

Consider technical capability, workshop capacity, parts availability, geographic coverage, mobile servicing, out-of-hours support and specialist repair facilities. Just as important are clear processes for booking, authorisation, defect escalation, VOR reporting and communication when delays occur.

The SMR provider should also give the Fleet Operator meaningful management information, not simply invoices and repair records. Visibility of downtime, spend, repeat defects, repair trends and VOR performance allows the fleet team to identify recurring issues and challenge supplier performance.

Maintenance records and supporting documentation should be readily available, providing a clear audit trail across every provider and asset type.

Ultimately, supplier performance should be measured by its impact on the operation. A competitive labour rate has limited value if vehicles spend several days waiting for work to begin.

The objective is an SMR supplier network capable of supporting different fleet requirements while maintaining safety, compliance and operational availability.

Look Beyond the Maintenance Invoice

Comparing SMR expenditure between very different vehicle types can be misleading.

A specialist vehicle will almost inevitably cost more to maintain than a passenger car. The more useful question is whether the asset is delivering value relative to the work it performs.

Maintenance expenditure should therefore be considered alongside utilisation, downtime, age, repair frequency and operational importance.

A vehicle with rising repair costs may still justify retention if it performs a critical function reliably. Conversely, an apparently inexpensive vehicle can become costly if repeated failures continually disrupt the operation.

Looking at the maintenance bill in isolation only tells part of the story.

Build a Complete Picture

Ultimately, managing SMR across a mixed fleet is about balancing standardisation with flexibility.

There should be common principles: vehicles and equipment must be safe, compliant, maintained correctly and available when required. But achieving those outcomes does not mean every asset has to follow the same process.

The most effective approach recognises differences in vehicle type, duty cycle, operating environment and operational criticality, while bringing the information together into a manageable overall picture.

For the Fleet Operator, that means moving beyond one basic question:

"When is this vehicle due for a service?"

Instead, consider:

- **What does this asset do?**
- **How is it being used?**
- **What maintenance does the complete asset require?**
- **How critical is it to the operation?**
- **What is its condition telling us?**
- **And when is the best opportunity to take it out of service?**

For a mixed fleet, those are the questions that turn SMR from a maintenance schedule into an effective asset availability strategy.●

Stream: Connecting Data, Safety and the Fleet

For more than 25 years, SM UK has built its reputation around vehicle safety, working with HGV operators to introduce solutions that support compliance, protect O Licences and create safer working environments.

That experience has also shaped the company's development. Alongside its established HGV safety business, SM UK has significantly expanded its LCV conversion capabilities, working with leading OEMs and a growing number of essential services fleet operators.

Today, the business is increasingly able to support complex and diverse fleets across a much broader range of requirements, bringing together vehicle conversions, safety systems, retrofit expertise and connected fleet technology.

An important part of that development is Stream. Bringing together vehicle tracking, camera technology and operational fleet data, Stream has been developed around the real-world challenges faced by fleet and transport professionals. Its purpose is not simply to generate more information, but to help operators understand what is happening across their fleets, identify emerging risks and turn that information into preventative action.

From driver behaviour and distraction to incident investigation, compliance and vehicle utilisation, the platform reflects SM UK's belief that technology should provide fleet professionals with the real-time information they need to make better decisions.

Essential Fleet Manager spoke with Tom Clarke of SM UK about the thinking behind Stream, how it is being used to address some of the most persistent challenges facing commercial vehicle operators, and why connected technology has become an increasingly important part of SM UK's Total Fleet Solutions.



25 years of HGV safety expertise, now supporting increasingly diverse fleets.



Q: SM UK has more than 25 years of experience in HGV safety. How much has that heritage influenced the development of Stream?

It has influenced it enormously. Stream isn't a technology product that has been developed in isolation; it comes from more than 25 years of working directly with commercial vehicle operators and understanding the practical challenges they face around fleet safety.

That experience has given us a very clear view of what operators actually need from technology. It needs to be reliable, straightforward to use and, importantly, properly supported. We've taken what we've learned from working with fleets and built Stream around those real-world requirements.

That also extends to the hardware and installation. We test and specify the technology ourselves, and every Stream installation is carried out by our own engineers rather than subcontractors. There's a direct connection between the technology, the engineering and the people supporting the customer.

Q: For somebody encountering Stream for the first time, could you talk us through the platform and how the different elements work together?

At its simplest, Stream is about bringing the key elements of fleet safety and management into one place.

There are three main areas: live vehicle tracking, video, and driver safety through AI technology. Operators can see where vehicles are and how they're being driven, access camera footage, and monitor driver behaviour all through a single login.

The important thing is that these aren't isolated functions and the information can work together. For example, if an event occurs, the operator can access the relevant footage and the associated information, understand what happened and then use that evidence as part of a driver coaching conversation.

Also, incident management is built right into the platform. Stream can surface pre-clipped footage around an impact, making it much quicker to establish what happened and provide evidence for insurers or other parties.

Q: There are already numerous telematics and fleet management platforms available. What did you feel was missing, and what makes Stream different?

The market isn't short of technology, but what we felt was missing was integration and accountability.

Many operators have ended up using several different systems: one for tracking, another for cameras, another for compliance or maintenance. That creates additional administration and, more importantly, means the information isn't necessarily connected.

Stream brings those core functions together through one platform

and one login. But we don't see the software as the whole proposition. What makes Stream different is the combination of technology, engineering and support.

SM UK selects and tests the hardware, installs it with its own engineers, and supports the customer afterwards. We're a VCA-accredited installer with workshops in Leeds and Tamworth and mobile engineers covering the UK. In short, customers aren't simply buying a piece of software and being left to manage the rest themselves; they have the weight of SM UK behind them.



Camera technology installed and supported by SM UK's own engineers.

Q: Driver behaviour remains one of the most difficult areas for fleet operators to influence. Despite training, education and tougher legislation, we still see behaviours such as hand-held mobile phone use. Why do you think these problems persist?

There are a number of reasons why professional drivers may still use their phones while driving, although much of this is subjective. Some point to the pressures of work and tight deadlines, others to overconfidence in their driving ability, while for some it may simply be the day-to-day habit we all have of reaching for our mobile phones. Knowing that something is unsafe doesn't necessarily mean somebody will always make the right decision in the moment.

Driving is a human activity, and distraction, fatigue and poor decision-making can happen very quickly. Traditional approaches such as training and policies are essential, but they're largely preventative and separate from a driver's day-to-day job. Technology gives operators another layer by providing visibility of what is actually happening on the road.

Stream's approach is to move beyond simply recording poor behaviour. AI-enabled cameras can identify behaviours such as mobile phone use, fatigue, distraction and seatbelt non-compliance and provide an alert to the driver in real time to correct the behaviour.

The other important part is what happens afterwards. An alert can be logged and timestamped, with the associated footage made available to the fleet manager. That can then feed into driver coaching, so the conversation is based on a specific event rather than a general accusation.

Q: Some risks are much harder to identify than speeding or mobile phone use. Fatigue and distraction, for example, can develop without a driver necessarily breaking a specific rule. Can technology help fleet managers identify those risks earlier?

Yes, and that's one of the areas where AI and driver-facing cameras can add significant value.

Fatigue and distraction aren't necessarily single, obvious events. They can develop over time, which makes them much harder for a fleet manager to identify from traditional telematics alone.



Stream's AI-enabled camera technology is designed to monitor driver behaviour in real time and identify risks such as fatigue and distraction. Where an unsafe behaviour is detected, the driver can receive an in-cab alert, giving them an opportunity to correct it immediately.

For the operator, those events also create a record that can be reviewed afterwards. That means the technology isn't simply reacting to incidents; it can help identify patterns of behaviour that may need attention before they develop into something more serious.

Q: Presumably the value of the information captured becomes particularly apparent when an incident occurs. How does Stream help an operator establish what actually happened?

This is where having video and telematics working together becomes particularly powerful.

When an incident occurs, the operator needs answers quickly. Stream continuously records high-definition footage from external, forward and driver-facing cameras, with footage securely stored and accessible through the platform.

Stream allows fast surfacing of footage from the time, location and/or impact event, rather than requiring someone to search manually through hours of recordings. The footage can then be viewed or downloaded and shared with insurers or third parties.

You also have the wider context provided by vehicle tracking and driver behaviour data. So rather than relying on recollections or assumptions, the operator has a much clearer evidence trail of what happened.

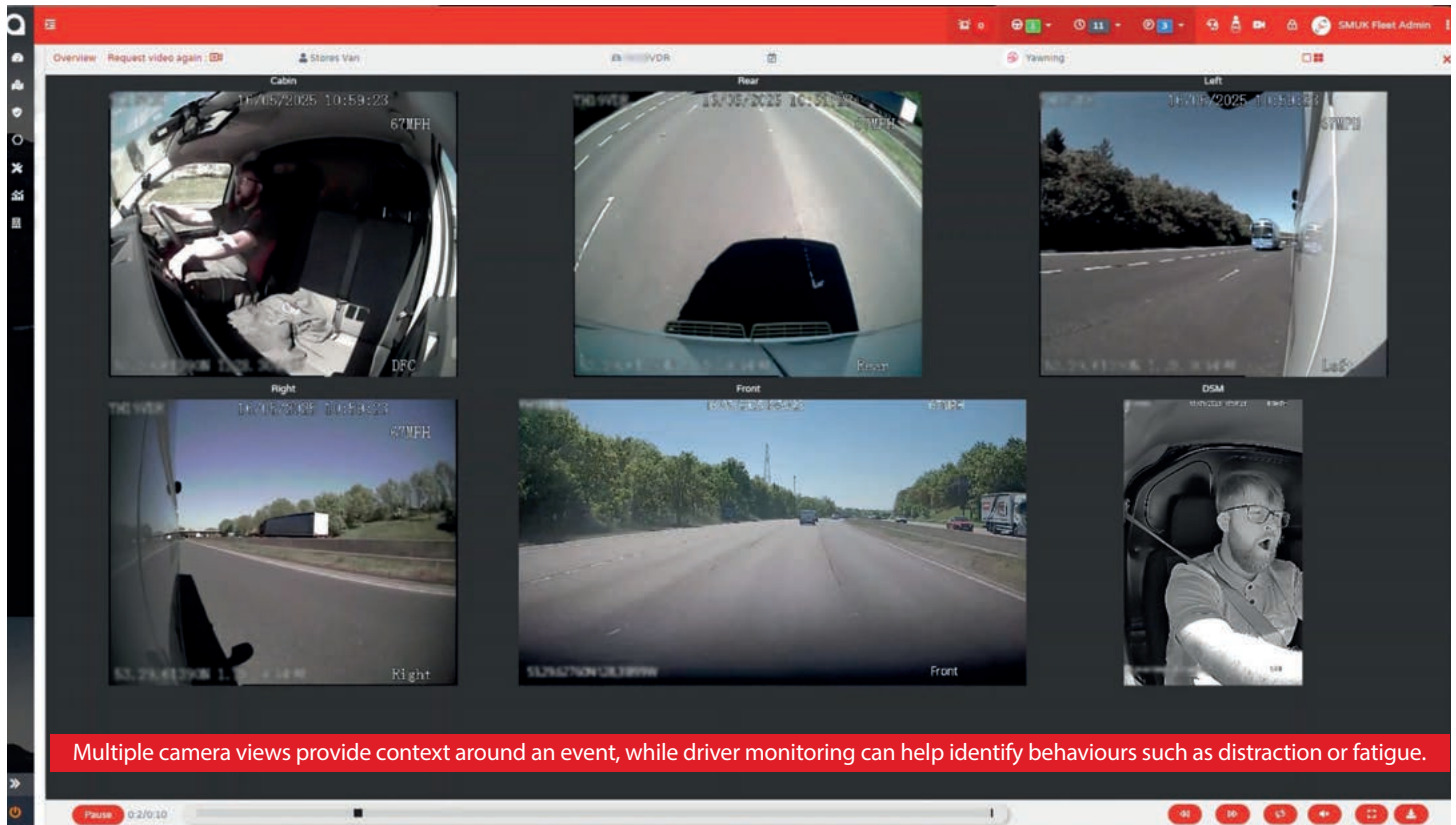
Q: Cameras and driver monitoring can understandably create concerns about surveillance. Is resistance from drivers something you encounter when organisations first consider introducing this technology?

It's understandable that drivers can have concerns. Nobody wants to feel that technology is simply being introduced to watch them or catch them doing something wrong.

That's why we believe the way the technology is introduced and used is just as important as the technology itself. We support the drivers and educate them on the in-cab systems so they understand exactly how they work, what to expect and how they are there to help them.

The objective should be safer driving, not surveillance for surveillance's sake. Stream gives fleet managers evidence that can support constructive conversations with drivers. If an event occurs, the driver and manager can look at what actually happened and discuss how it can be avoided in future. We know from experience that the driver isn't always at fault.

There's also an immediate safety benefit. With AI-enabled cameras, a driver can receive an in-cab warning when certain unsafe behaviours are detected. So the system isn't only producing information for the fleet manager; it can potentially help the driver in the moment as well.



Q: You've now had the opportunity to see Stream operating within real fleets. Can you give us some examples of where the platform has made a tangible difference?

We've seen Stream adopted across a range of demanding fleet environments, including Powerday, Tarmac and Sovereign Transport Services.

Powerday, a leading waste management & recycling company, is a particularly good example. It operates more than 150 vehicles across the UK and has made Stream its default fleet safety camera system, including for new vehicles joining the fleet. Their requirement was not simply for cameras, but for a proactive safety solution capable of addressing risks such as distraction, fatigue and compliance.

The combination of AI-driven driver monitoring, immediate in-cab alerts and the ability to use recorded events for follow-up gives them a much more proactive approach to fleet safety. Just as importantly, Powerday highlighted the value of having one accountable partner handling the hardware, software, installation and support.

That's really what we're trying to achieve with Stream: technology that becomes part of an organisation's wider safety culture rather than simply another device fitted to a vehicle.

Q: Fleet safety and compliance requirements never stand still. How have you designed Stream so that it can evolve as legislation, technology and operators' requirements change?

We recognise that this is not a static market. Technology changes, legislation changes and the risks operators face change as well.

That's one reason we don't simply choose hardware based on what is cheapest or newest. We test the technology for reliability, longevity, compliance and real-world performance before recommending it. We also stay closely tuned to changes in fleet

safety legislation so that we can respond as requirements evolve.

The platform itself is also designed around bringing different fleet functions together, which gives us scope to continue developing the service rather than treating it as a single-purpose telematics product.

Ultimately, the combination of our software platform, hardware expertise and in-house engineering capability means we can evolve the overall solution as customer requirements change.

Q: Finally, Stream represents quite a significant extension of what people may traditionally associate with SM UK. Alongside your HGV and LCV conversion capabilities and vehicle safety expertise, where does Stream now fit within the wider business?

We see Stream as a natural extension of what SM UK has always done.

Our background is fleet safety. We've spent more than 25 years working with commercial vehicles, so moving into connected technology, video and telematics is really about applying that same safety expertise in a different way.

The difference is that we're now able to support operators not only with the physical vehicle and safety equipment, but with the information that comes from those vehicles and how that information can be used.

Stream sits alongside our existing engineering and vehicle safety capabilities rather than replacing them. The common thread is making commercial fleets safer and giving operators the tools and support to manage that safety effectively.

And that's why the engineering side remains so important to us. Stream is not just an app or a telematics subscription. It's a total fleet solution, backed by SM UK's own engineers, workshops and UK-based support team.●

Discover the Stream fleet management platform and book a demonstration, visit: streamfleet.co.uk

stream
by SM UK

TYRE HEALTH CHECKLIST FOR FLEET MANAGERS

A quick monthly check helps you spot issues early, reduce downtime and keep your fleet rolling safely and efficiently.



**GOOD TYRES
DELIVER MORE
THAN JUST MILES**



Protect your drivers and other road users



Reduce running costs and unexpected downtime



Support compliance and sustainability goals

1



TREAD DEPTH

Check tread depth across the full width and around the tyre. Ensure it meets the legal minimum.

2



TYRE PRESSURE

Check and adjust pressure when tyres are cold. Correct pressure improves safety and fuel efficiency.

3



CONDITION & WEAR

Look for cuts, bulges, cracks or uneven wear patterns. Investigate and address the cause.

4



ALIGNMENT

Check for uneven wear which may indicate alignment or suspension issues.

5



BALANCE

Unbalanced wheels can cause vibration, uneven wear and increased maintenance costs.

6



WHEEL NUTS

Ensure all wheel nuts are present and correctly tightened to manufacturer specifications.

7



RECORD & REVIEW

Record your checks and any actions taken. Monitor trends and act before small issues become big problems.



**CHECK TODAY.
PREVENT TOMORROW.**



**A few minutes now
can save time, money
and lives.**

Van Loading: Understanding Weight, Position and Restraint

For most fleet operatives, loading a work van is simply part of the working day. Tools, materials, machinery, spare parts and specialist equipment may be loaded and unloaded several times during a shift.

But whether that vehicle remains safe to drive depends not only on how much is being carried, but where it is positioned and how securely it is restrained.

For van fleet operators, the challenge is therefore not simply establishing safe vehicle limits. Those limits need to be translated into clear, practical information that the people using the vehicles can understand and apply every day.

Don't Expect the Driver to Work it Out

Every operative using a vehicle should know how much it can safely carry.

That sounds straightforward, but the manufacturer's published payload may not represent what is actually available once a working vehicle enters service.

Racking, ply lining, welfare equipment, beacons, tow bars, additional batteries, tools and permanently carried equipment all add weight. Drivers and passengers add further weight.

The important figure for an operative is therefore not necessarily just the payload of a standard van, but how much additional load their particular vehicle can safely carry in its normal working configuration.

Rather than expecting drivers to calculate this themselves, operators should consider providing clear vehicle-specific load information in the cab.

Where possible, this information should be positioned somewhere readily visible to the operative and explained as part of the vehicle handover process.

Make it Relevant to the Job

An 850kg available payload figure is useful, but an operative still needs to understand what it means in practice.

If a vehicle normally carries 300kg of tools and equipment, for example, the operator

could provide guidance on how much additional material can be collected.

For vehicles performing defined roles, load plans can go further by identifying where frequently carried equipment should be positioned and how it should be secured.

The objective is to remove uncertainty.

An operative shouldn't be standing beside a loaded van wondering whether it is safe to drive.

Weight isn't the Only Limit

A vehicle can remain below its maximum permitted weight and still be incorrectly loaded.

Front and rear axles have their own weight limits, which means concentrating too much equipment in one part of the vehicle can create an overload even though the overall vehicle weight remains legal.

Operatives don't necessarily need to understand the engineering behind axle loading, but they do need clear instructions about load placement.

As a simple principle:

Keep it Low – Keep it Balanced – Keep it Secure

Heavy equipment should generally be positioned low down and appropriately distributed rather than concentrated at one end or on one side of the vehicle.

If the operation regularly involves carrying substantial or variable loads, periodic weighing can help establish whether the vehicle remains within both overall and axle limits.

Heavy doesn't mean secure

One of the most important messages for operatives is that an item does not become secure simply because it is heavy.

A toolbox, generator, cylinder or piece of machinery that appears impossible to move by hand can move with

considerable force during emergency braking or a collision.

Equipment should therefore be restrained using the systems provided for the vehicle.

Depending on the operation, these could include:

- Purpose-designed racking
- Anchor points and load rails
- Straps
- Nets
- Load locks
- Partitions and bulkheads
- Dedicated equipment holders

Operatives should also know how each restraint is intended to be used.

Providing a securing strap is of little benefit if employees have never been shown where it should attach or how tight it needs to be.

Don't Forget the Cab

Safe loading doesn't stop at the bulkhead.

Phones, tablets, laptops, toolboxes, drinks bottles and other equipment left loose inside the cab can become dangerous projectiles during sudden braking or a collision.

Operatives should be instructed to use the storage provided and keep seats, floors and dashboards free from loose equipment.

This is an easy message to incorporate into daily vehicle checks:

If it can move, secure it or stow it.

Check Before Every Journey – not Just Every Morning

Load security should form part of the vehicle's pre-use check, but for many essential service fleets that isn't enough.

A highways, utilities or maintenance vehicle might leave the depot correctly loaded at 7am but be in a completely different configuration by lunchtime.

Tools are removed and replaced. Materials



are delivered or collected. Waste may be added. Equipment may be moved to gain access to something else.

The operative therefore needs to understand that the load should be reassessed whenever it changes significantly.

Before moving off, ask:

- Is everything secure?
- Is the weight reasonably balanced?
- Has anything heavy been moved?
- Are straps, restraints and anchor points secure and undamaged?
- Has anything been added that could take the vehicle over its limit?

If there is any doubt, the vehicle shouldn't simply be driven in the hope that everything is all right.

Make Reporting Easy

Operatives also need to know what to do when something isn't right.



A damaged strap, broken piece of racking or failed anchor point should not result in an employee improvising a solution because they need to get to the next job.

Operators should provide a straightforward reporting procedure and make clear who should be contacted if the driver is unsure about a load.

The same principle applies to weight.

If an operative is being asked to collect additional equipment or materials and doesn't know whether the vehicle can safely carry them, there should be a clear route for obtaining advice.

Watch for Weight Creep

Vehicles rarely remain exactly as they were on the day they entered service.

Additional tools appear. Spare parts accumulate. New equipment is introduced and items that are no longer required don't always get removed.

Over months and years, this can significantly reduce available payload.

Periodic vehicle weighing and load-area inspections can help operators identify this 'weight creep' before it becomes a problem.

Operatives can help too. Encouraging employees to remove unnecessary equipment rather than treating the van as permanent storage can make a significant difference.

Roof Loads Need the Same Discipline

Ladders, pipes, barriers and other externally carried equipment need to be properly restrained using equipment designed for the purpose.

Drivers should understand both the weight restrictions associated with roof-mounted equipment and the effect that additional weight at height can have on vehicle handling.

They should also know the vehicle's overall height where roof-mounted equipment changes it significantly.

The detailed policy may sit with fleet

management, but the message to the person actually driving the vehicle can be much simpler:

Fleet operators need to provide vehicles that are suitable for their intended role, establish their real operational weights, provide suitable load restraint and storage systems, and give employees clear instructions on how they should be used.

If a vehicle is routinely operating close to its limits, or employees continually struggle to fit and secure everything required for the job, that may indicate a specification problem rather than a driver problem.

The question then becomes whether a vehicle with greater capacity, a different conversion or a redesigned equipment layout would provide a safer solution.

Ultimately, the operative needs to know four things every time they get behind the wheel:

- How much can I carry?
- Where should I put it?
- How should I secure it?
- What do I do if I'm unsure?

If a fleet operator can make the answers to those four questions obvious, safe loading becomes much easier to put into practice.

Safe Loading: Five Simple Rules for Operatives

1. Know Your Limit:

Check the vehicle's load information and never exceed its permitted weight.

2. Keep Weight Low and Balanced:

Don't concentrate heavy equipment at the rear or on one side.

3. Secure Everything:

If it can move, restrain it or put it in secure storage.

4. Check Again When the Load Changes

Loading and unloading during the day can alter weight distribution and load security.

5. If You're Not Sure Ask:

Don't guess whether a vehicle is overloaded or whether equipment is adequately secured.

The operator still has responsibility

Safe loading should not become a policy that simply transfers responsibility to the driver. ●



Fleetclear Launches StreetVision, Creating a New Level of Operational Intelligence from Existing Fleet Vehicles



StreetVision creates a level of operational visibility that was previously impossible at scale. The sheer volume of visual data generated across hundreds or thousands of vehicle journeys cannot be reviewed, interpreted and acted on manually. AI changes this, allowing organisations to continuously analyse activity across their operation and identify the risks, conditions and events that matter, moving fleet management beyond isolated checks, sample-based reviews and post-incident investigation.

"Fleet vehicles travel the same roads and communities every day, capturing an extraordinary amount of information about what is happening around them. Until now, there has been no practical way to turn that volume of visual data into usable operational intelligence at scale. StreetVision changes that."

Chris Waller, Chief Technology Officer, Fleetclear

A Step Change in Operational Visibility

Traditional fleet technology has focused on the vehicle itself - location, movement, performance and recorded safety events. StreetVision extends that visibility to the world around the vehicle. As fleets complete their normal operations, their vehicles become mobile sources of intelligence, continuously observing the streets, working environments and neighbourhoods they travel through.

For large fleets, that increase in observability is significant, creating a volume of coverage no site visit, manual check or audit could replicate, and letting organisations focus intervention where it has the greatest impact.

Helping Prevent Incidents Before They Happen

StreetVision is already being used to support reversing safety, one of the highest-risk activities in workplace vehicle operations. The technology automatically analyses reversing activity, identifying factors including pedestrian presence, crew positioning and PPE compliance, giving safety teams a far broader and more representative view than occasional observation allows.

Rather than finding out about unsafe behaviour after an incident has occurred, operators can identify repeated risk earlier, understand where procedures are breaking down, and intervene sooner, reducing the chance of a serious incident occurring.

From Reactive Reporting to Proactive Intelligence

Many operational processes still depend on isolated observations - a supervisor's check, a resident's report, an incident that triggers an investigation. These remain useful, but only provide a partial view. By continuously analysing routine fleet journeys, StreetVision allows organisations to move from snapshots of activity to much broader operational intelligence - seeing what is happening repeatedly, where problems are emerging, and where action should be taken next.

Turning Fleets into Mobile Intelligence Networks

The opportunity extends well beyond reversing safety. Local authority and service fleets already travel through towns, cities and communities every day, often covering the same streets repeatedly as part of normal service delivery. StreetVision turns those journeys into a new source of intelligence, with the potential to identify environmental issues, street conditions, defects, service concerns and other observable events automatically - so a vehicle performing one job can create valuable insight for another.

A refuse collection vehicle, for example, may already travel through every residential street in an area. StreetVision allows that same journey to provide useful information about the environment it passes through, without requiring a separate inspection vehicle, survey or manual reporting process.

"The real opportunity with AI isn't always in deploying more technology. It's in making far better use of what's already there. StreetVision turns existing infrastructure into something more intelligent, more valuable and capable of delivering insights that simply weren't possible before."

Gavin Thoday, Chief Executive Officer, Fleetclear

Unlocking More Value from Technology Already in Place

One of StreetVision's biggest advantages is that it builds on compatible camera infrastructure customers already operate - vehicle cameras are no longer limited to recording incidents and evidence, but become part of a broader operational intelligence platform, extracting substantially more value from technology already installed across their fleet.

Practical AI with Clear Operational Value

StreetVision has been built around real operational problems, not AI for its own sake - applied to the specific requirements Fleetclear identifies directly with customers.

"There is a lot of discussion about what AI might do in the future. StreetVision is about what it can do now. It gives organisations visibility across their operations on a scale that was previously impossible, and turns that visibility into information they can actually act on. That is where the real value is."

Chris Waller, Chief Technology Officer, Fleetclear

The platform is already on a rapid expansion path, with new capabilities in environmental monitoring, operational assurance and wider street-level intelligence planned for later this year.

Designed with Privacy at Its Core

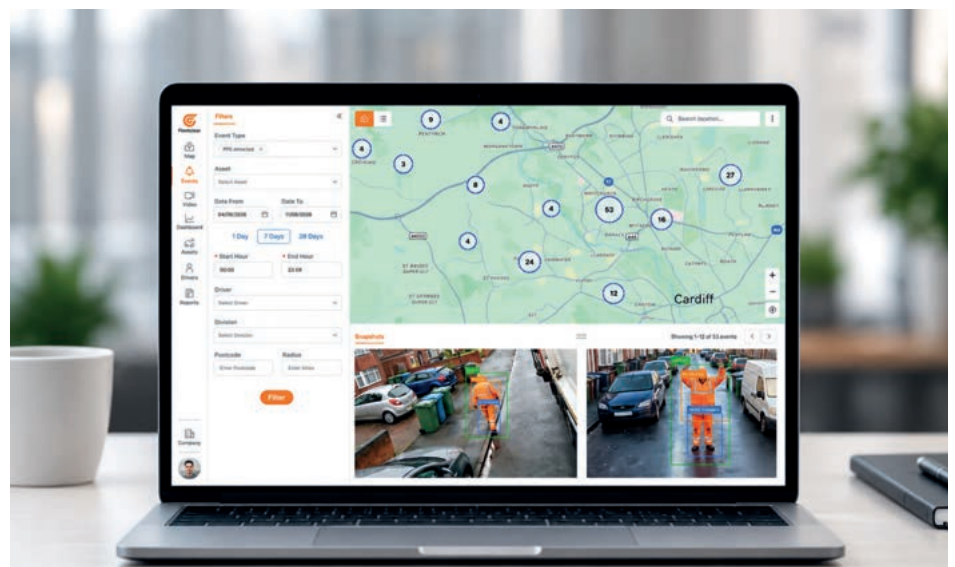
StreetVision has been designed with privacy and responsible use as core considerations. Its purpose is to identify operational events, conditions and risks, not to monitor individuals, and is designed to support customer compliance with UK GDPR and wider data protection requirements.

A New Generation of Fleet Intelligence

Tracking and telematics gave organisations visibility of where their vehicles were and how they were being used. StreetVision takes the next step, allowing organisations to understand far more about what is happening around those vehicles and across the environments they serve - better oversight and earlier intervention for fleet operators, earlier risk identification for safety teams, better use of existing resources for local authorities, and the potential for safer, faster, better services for the public.



StreetVision automatically reviews reversing manoeuvres, helping fleets identify crew visibility, compliance so recurring risks can be addressed sooner.



StreetVision is available now to UK fleet operators and local authorities.

For more information, visit fleetclear.com/solutions/streetvision or call +44 (0)1386 630155

About Fleetclear

Fleetclear provides connected fleet safety, compliance and operational technology for commercial vehicle operators across the UK. With 17 years of experience, Fleetclear works with organisations across waste management, local government, transport and construction, combining vehicle technology with connected software through its Fleetclear Connect platform, alongside AI-powered products including StreetVision and the award-winning Live Lane Information System.

Fleetclear - where safety, compliance and innovation connect.●

Building Resilience Across Public Sector Fleets to Improve Uptime and Incident Response Rates

By Simon Staton, Client Management Director, Venson Automotive Solutions

For every fleet operator, vehicle downtime affects productivity, service delivery and cost. For public sector organisations, particularly blue-light and emergency services, the consequences can be more serious. An unavailable vehicle can reduce frontline capacity, extend response times and affect an organisation's ability to protect and support the public. Organisations operating a fleet of vehicles should stop treating pre-use checks, tyre management, driver training, maintenance, accident response and replacement-vehicle provision as separate activities. Connecting these functions creates an "uptime chain" that helps prevent avoidable incidents, accelerates recovery and turns maintenance and incident data into future prevention.

Drawing on its experience of supporting public sector and emergency-service fleets, Venson Automotive Solutions examines three essential elements of operational resilience - operational continuity through workshop and supply-chain control, specialist infrastructure for essential-service vehicles and structured accident and claims management.

Looking beyond workshop time

Vehicle downtime is often measured only as time on a workshop ramp, but the operational and financial impact begins the moment a vehicle becomes unavailable.



A structured accident response can minimise disruption, accelerate recovery and help protect frontline vehicle availability.

The full cost can include employee downtime, disrupted appointments, delayed services, recovery, administration and replacement-vehicle charges. Essential-service fleets may also need to redeploy other vehicles and crews, reducing capacity elsewhere.

Unscheduled downtime can cost organisations thousands of pounds a day and cause reputational damage, so fleet operators must look beyond the repair itself and consider how efficiently the whole operation responds once a vehicle comes off the road.

Preventing Avoidable Downtime

An effective uptime strategy starts before a breakdown or collision occurs. Drivers should complete routine pre-use inspections and have a straightforward process for reporting defects, damage and warning lights.

Tyres require particular attention. Incorrect pressure can affect handling,

braking, tyre wear, fuel consumption and driver safety. A small problem identified during a pre-use check can often be resolved before it develops into a roadside breakdown or a more expensive repair.

This reflects DVSA roadworthiness guidance, which identifies driver walkaround checks, defect reporting, planned safety inspections and management oversight as essential to a robust maintenance system, helping prevent sudden component failure and unscheduled downtime.

Using Records and Data Effectively

Every vehicle should have a documented maintenance schedule reflecting its age, mileage, duty cycle and operating environment. Records should show when inspections were due, when they took place, which defects were identified and what remedial work was completed.

Electronic maintenance systems make this information easier to manage

and help identify vehicles generating disproportionate repair costs or downtime. Telematics and vehicle diagnostics provide further insight, highlighting warning signs, mileage and driving behaviours associated with increased wear or collision risk.

Technology should support, not replace, driver checks, vehicle inspections and active fleet management.

Data only creates value if someone reviews it, prioritises risks and ensures the necessary action is taken.

Operational Continuity: Workshop and Supply-Chain Control

Once a vehicle requires attention, control over the repair process becomes critical. With experience in operating its own workshops and proactively managing the SMR supply chain gives Venson greater visibility of repair quality, capacity, scheduling, parts availability and vehicle-off-road time. This oversight has consistently improved availability across the public sector and emergency-service fleets it supports.

Specialist Infrastructure for Essential-Service Vehicles

Essential-service vehicles often need more than a standard repair network. Aspects such as secure facilities, technicians familiar with ancillary and onboard equipment and processes for handling operationally sensitive assets are integral to a contract. Where a vehicle cannot be returned quickly enough, access to a suitable replacement is essential. A standard hire vehicle may not meet the payload, accessibility, equipment or security needs of an essential-service fleet,



Greater control over workshop capacity, repair quality, scheduling and parts availability can help minimise vehicle-off-road time.

making advance planning vital.

Structured Accident and Claims Management

Following a collision, speed, communication and clearly defined responsibilities help minimise disruption. Drivers need a simple reporting process, and fleet teams need immediate visibility of the incident, the vehicle's condition and its operational implications.

Centralising accident and claims management can reduce administration, accelerate repairs and improve communication between drivers, workshops, insurers and third parties.

Incident management shouldn't finish when the vehicle returns to service. Fleet teams should have access to data to analyse collision and repair information to identify recurring

causes, locations, vehicle types or driver groups, informing training, tyre policies, vehicle specifications, maintenance intervals and procurement decisions.

This completes the "uptime chain". Prevention, early identification, maintenance, workshop control, replacement mobility, incident response and post-event analysis. For public sector fleets, success is not simply about repairing vehicles faster. It means preventing avoidable failures, protecting frontline capacity and returning vehicles to service safely and efficiently.●

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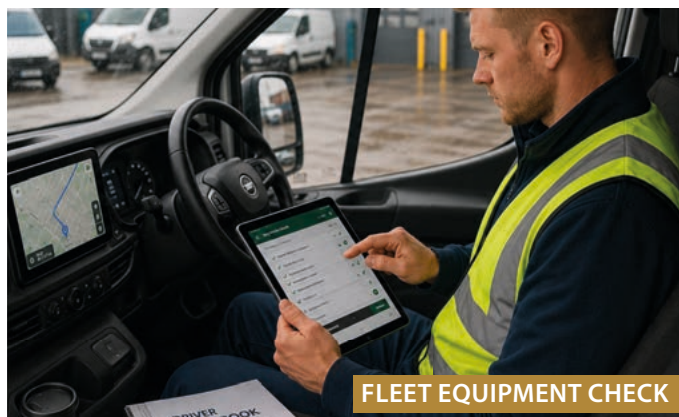
Pre-Use Vehicle Check

A few minutes spent checking a vehicle before it starts work can identify defects before they become a safety risk, compliance issue or cause of avoidable downtime. This practical four-stage guide takes operatives through the key areas to check before setting off.

1 STAGE 1: IN THE CAB



DRIVER SAFETY & CONTROLS CHECK



FLEET EQUIPMENT CHECK

Driver Safety & Controls Checks:

- Seat belts operate correctly and show no signs of damage.
- Horn functions correctly.
- Driver's seat adjusts correctly.
- Heating, ventilation / demisting systems operate effectively.
- Windscreen wipers and washers operate correctly and washer fluid is available.
- Wiper blades clear the windscreen effectively.
- Windscreen is free from chips / cracks.
- Mirrors are clean, correctly adjusted and give clear visibility.
- Dashboard displays are operating correctly.
- No warning lights are illuminated.
- Steering feels normal with no excessive free play.
- Brake pedal operates correctly without excessive travel.
- Fuel level is sufficient for the planned journey or, for electric vehicles, battery charge and available range are adequate.

Fleet Equipment Check:

- In-cab CCTV cameras, driver monitoring systems and telematics equipment (where fitted) are securely mounted, clean and operating correctly.
- Fire extinguisher and first aid kit (where required) are present.
- Vehicle keys and any security or immobiliser fobs are present.
- Fuel card (where required) is available.
- Charging card or RFID tag (where required) is available.
- Any required documentation or permits are present.

Additional Final Safety Check:

Remove or secure loose items inside the cab that could become projectiles during heavy braking or a collision.

2 STAGE 2: UNDER THE BONNET



FLUIDS CHECK

Fluid Levels Check:

- Engine oil (ICE vehicles).
- Coolant.
- Brake fluid.
- Windscreen washer fluid.
- AdBlue® (where fitted).
- Look for signs of fluid leaks.
- Check for damaged or loose components.
- Ensure there are no obvious defects within the engine bay.

Best Practice: Drivers are not expected to carry out mechanical repairs. The purpose of the under-bonnet inspection is to identify obvious defects or low fluid levels and report them promptly so they can be rectified before they develop into more serious faults.

3 STAGE 2: UNDER THE BONNET

Lights & Visibility Check:

- Headlights, sidelights, brake lights, indicators, reversing lights and hazard warning lights are operating correctly.
- Beacon lights, light bars and work lights (where fitted) are secure and functioning correctly.
- Cameras, reversing cameras and ADAS sensors are clean and unobstructed.

Tyres & Wheels Check:

- Tyres have sufficient tread depth, looking beyond the legal minimum.
- Inspect for cuts, bulges, uneven wear or embedded objects.
- Tyre pressures appear correct for the vehicle and load.
- Wheel nut indicators (where fitted) are correctly aligned.
- Wheel trims (where fitted) are secure.

Bodywork & Security Check:

- Bodywork is free from significant damage.
- Doors, hinges, handles and locks operate correctly.
- Number plates are secure, clean and legible.
- Roof-Mounted Equipment (where fitted).
- Check fuel cap and flap is closed correctly.

Under the Vehicle Check:

- Look underneath for signs of oil, coolant or other fluid leaks.
- Check for loose or damaged components where visible.
- Inspect the rear exhaust pipe for signs of damage or corrosion

Roof Check

- Ladders are securely fastened and retaining clamps or locking devices are fully engaged.
- Roof racks and roof storage systems are secure and free from damage.
- Pipes, conduit carriers and other roof-mounted equipment are secure.
- Beacon lights, aerials and other mounted equipment are securely fixed.
- Remove any debris or loose materials from the roof before driving.

Electric Vehicles Check:

- Ensure the charging flap is closed, the cable is present, undamaged and stored securely.



LIGHTS & TYRES



CHECK FOR LEAKS



CHECK LADDERS ARE SECURE



CHECK CHARGING EQUIPMENT

"The walk-around inspection doesn't prevent defects, it helps you find them before they become a safety risk."

4 STAGE 4: LOAD AREA



Complete the inspection by checking load area, check:

- Load is secure and correctly restrained.
- Load restraint equipment is present and in good condition.
- Shelving, racking, tools and equipment are secure.
- Rear and side doors operate correctly and lock securely.

REMEMBER: Always advise drivers to follow your organisation's vehicle inspection procedure, as your fleet may require additional checks for specialist equipment such as tail lifts, cranes, generators, PTO equipment, CCTV systems, emergency equipment or other ancillary devices.



Driver Knowledge

A daily vehicle inspection helps ensure a vehicle is safe to drive, but every driver should also be familiar with the vehicle they are using. This is particularly important where organisations operate mixed fleets or vehicles are shared between multiple drivers. Before setting off, drivers should know:

- Whether the vehicle carries a spare wheel or is fitted with a tyre repair kit.
- The location of the wheel locking nut key (where fitted).
- Where the jack, wheel brace and towing eye are stored (where applicable).
- The fuel type required or, for electric vehicles, the charging requirements.
- The location of the bonnet release and how to open the bonnet safely.
- The location of the charging cable and charging port (electric vehicles).
- The vehicle's height, width, gross vehicle weight and payload, particularly where roof-mounted equipment is fitted.
- The vehicle's towing capacity, where towing is permitted.
- The location of the first aid kit, fire extinguisher and any other emergency equipment.
- How to contact the fleet team or breakdown provider if assistance is required.
- The vehicle registration number and fleet or asset number.
- Any company-specific procedures relating to vehicle inspections, defect reporting, breakdowns or accident reporting.●

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Mobile Phones: Keeping Drivers Connected Without Compromising Compliance

Mobile and connected technology has become an essential part of fleet operations. Navigation, job allocation, compliance systems and communication tools can all support drivers during the working day, but they can also create potential distractions behind the wheel.

For operators, managing that risk requires more than simply reminding drivers not to use a handheld phone. With smartphones, tablets, sat-navs and other connected systems increasingly present in the cab, the challenge is to ensure technology supports the driver without competing for their attention when it should be on the road.

Know Where the Law Draws the Line

The law on handheld mobile phone use is deliberately broad.

It is illegal to hold and use a phone, tablet, sat-nav or other device capable of sending or receiving data while driving. That prohibition applies whether the

device is online or offline and covers activities including making calls, sending messages, browsing the internet, taking photographs or videos and selecting music.

Importantly, being stationary does not necessarily mean a driver can pick up the phone.

The prohibition continues when stopped at traffic lights or queuing in traffic. It also applies to a vehicle fitted with technology that switches the engine off when stationary.

Drivers can use a handheld device when safely parked. There are also limited exceptions, including calling 999 or 112 in a genuine emergency where it is unsafe or impracticable to stop, making a contactless payment while the vehicle is stationary in specified circumstances, and using a device to park a vehicle remotely.

The Penalties Are Significant

A driver caught holding and using a phone while driving can receive six

penalty points and a £200 fine.

For somebody who passed their driving test within the previous two years, six points can result in their licence being revoked.

A case can also proceed to court, where a driver may be disqualified and face a maximum fine of £1,000 – rising to £2,500 for drivers of lorries or buses.

For an operator, however, the consequences can extend beyond the individual penalty. A driver who loses their licence can immediately affect vehicle availability, staffing and service delivery, while an incident involving distraction can expose weaknesses in an organisation's policies, training and management of occupational road risk.

Hands-Free Does Not Mean Risk-Free

This is where operator policies need to go further than simply repeating the legislation.

Hands-free equipment can legally be used provided the driver does not hold

the device. This might include Bluetooth, voice control, a dashboard or windscreen-mounted device, or an integrated vehicle system.

But legal does not necessarily mean appropriate in every situation.

Drivers must remain in proper control of their vehicle at all times. A hands-free conversation, voice message or interaction with an in-vehicle system can still divert attention from driving.

The HSE specifically identifies mobile phones, apps and notifications as potential distractions. Its guidance says employers should have a clear mobile phone policy and ensure hands-free use is sparingly and only when necessary.

Operators should therefore consider whether their own procedures inadvertently encourage unnecessary interaction while vehicles are moving.

Look at the Demands Placed on the Driver

A mobile phone policy cannot operate in isolation from the way work is organised.

If drivers are expected to acknowledge jobs immediately, answer calls from supervisors, respond to customer messages or regularly interact with an app, simply telling them not to use a phone while driving may create conflicting expectations.

The question for an operator is straightforward: can the driver complete the working day without feeling under pressure to interact with a device while the vehicle is moving?

If the answer is no, the process may need changing.

Managers and office-based colleagues should understand the rules too. Repeatedly calling a driver who is known to be on the road, or expecting an immediate response to a message, can undermine an otherwise sensible mobile phone policy.

A missed call should be allowed to remain a missed call until the driver can deal with it safely.

Build Safe Use into the Working Day

Where mobile technology forms part of the driver's job, operators should define when and how it can be used.

Job details and routes should ideally be reviewed before setting off. Any information that requires significant interaction should be dealt with while safely parked.

Where a job-management system sends updates during a journey, drivers should understand that there is no expectation to read or acknowledge them until it is safe to do so.

The same principle should apply to photographs, electronic signatures, proof-of-delivery systems, vehicle inspection apps and messaging platforms.

Technology should support the operation rather than create another task competing for the driver's attention.

Notifications Matter Too

The problem is not limited to answering a call.

A phone mounted correctly in a cradle can still generate a stream of visual and audible notifications. Messages, emails, job alerts and app notifications can all encourage the driver to look away from the road or consider whether they need to respond.

Operators should therefore consider the configuration of work devices as part of their risk controls.

Do-not-disturb or driving modes, restricted notifications and sensible application settings can reduce unnecessary interruptions. Where devices are centrally managed, organisations may also be able to establish standard configurations rather than leaving individual drivers to decide what should be enabled.

Make the Policy Clear

A good mobile phone policy should leave little room for interpretation.

It should make clear that handheld use while driving is prohibited, including when stationary in traffic, and explain when drivers are expected to stop before interacting with a device.

It should also address hands-free use, work-related apps, navigation systems and other connected devices rather than focusing solely on telephone calls.

Just as importantly, the policy needs to be understood by managers, dispatch teams and anyone else communicating with employees on the road.

Training should reinforce the policy, with drivers given practical examples of situations they are likely to encounter during their working day.

Technology Can Help – But It Is Not the Whole Answer

Modern fleet technology can provide additional controls.

Some telematics and camera systems can help operators identify behaviour associated with distraction, while mobile-device management and application settings can restrict or discourage certain interactions.

But technology should reinforce a clear policy rather than replace one.

Data also needs to be used proportionately. Where an operator identifies repeated risky behaviour, the objective should be to understand what is happening and intervene appropriately – whether that requires coaching, training, changes to working practices or formal action.

Review What Happens After an Incident

Mobile phone use should also form part of an operator's incident-review process.

Where circumstances justify it, organisations should consider whether distraction or communication demands may have contributed to an event. This should include more than simply asking whether the driver was physically holding a phone.

Was a call taking place? Had a work notification just arrived? Was the driver trying to follow an instruction? Were they under pressure to respond to a manager or customer?

Looking at the wider circumstances can reveal operational practices that need changing across the fleet.

Make Safe Use Part of the Culture

Ultimately, managing mobile phone distraction is as much about organisational culture as driver behaviour.

If the message is that safety comes first, drivers need to know they will not be criticised for failing to answer a call or acknowledge a message while driving.

Managers should lead by example and avoid creating expectations that conflict with the company's own policy.

Mobile connectivity has enormous operational benefits, and for many fleets it is now indispensable. The objective is not to remove that technology from the working environment, but to establish a clear boundary around its use.

For operators, the most effective rule may also be the simplest: if an interaction requires the driver's attention, it can wait until the vehicle is safely parked. ●



Contracts and Awards

Where Essential-Service Fleets Are Investing

Recent contract awards and procurement activity across local authorities, housing providers, emergency services, healthcare and utilities provide a useful snapshot of the priorities shaping operational fleets.

From telematics and driver safety to maintenance, vehicle replacement, specialist conversions and charging infrastructure, procurement decisions

reveal where organisations are investing to improve efficiency, compliance and operational resilience. They also highlight many of the challenges facing fleet operators today, including maintaining vehicle availability, managing costs, improving safety and ensuring vehicles and equipment remain fit for increasingly demanding operational roles.

Looking at activity across other essential services organisations can provide

a useful indication of how these challenges are being addressed, where investment is being prioritised and the types of solutions being adopted across comparable fleets.

Over the following pages, we look at some of the latest fleet-related contracts, awards and procurement activity across the sector and the suppliers selected to deliver them.



**FLEET MANAGEMENT,
SMR & UPTIME**

WALSALL HOUSING GROUP / ADEPT VEHICLE MANAGEMENT

End-to-end fleet management

Walsall Housing Group has appointed Adept Vehicle Management to provide a fully inclusive fleet management service covering owned and contract-hire vehicles.

The arrangement encompasses operational efficiency, compliance, duty of care and risk management, while also supporting the organisation's longer-term transition towards zero-emission vehicles.

It provides an example of fleet management being considered as an integrated service rather than individual requirements being procured separately.

SOUTHEND-ON-SEA CITY COUNCIL

Multi-supplier approach supports maintenance and tyres

Southend-on-Sea City Council has appointed specialist suppliers to

support different elements of its vehicle maintenance requirements.

Fairway Motors (Southend) and Plantexpand are involved in vehicle maintenance and repair provision, while Universal Tyre Company provides tyre support.

The arrangement demonstrates an alternative to a single-provider model, with different specialists supporting individual areas of SMR.

CARDIFF & VALE UNIVERSITY HEALTH BOARD / DRAGON FLEETCARE

Maintenance across owned and leased vehicles

Cardiff & Vale University Health Board has appointed Dragon Fleetcare to provide maintenance and servicing support covering owned and leased vehicles.

For healthcare fleets, consistency of maintenance oversight is particularly important where vehicles support a variety of clinical, facilities and operational functions.

The arrangement also highlights that maintenance responsibilities don't disappear simply because acquisition methods differ.

STOKE-ON-TRENT CITY COUNCIL / CIVICA

Technology keeps maintenance schedules on track

Stoke-on-Trent City Council is continuing its use of Civica's Tranman fleet management system across its vehicles and plant.

The technology automates scheduling of essential servicing and maintenance activities, supporting statutory compliance and helping ensure work takes place at the required intervals.

For a large mixed fleet, knowing what needs maintaining and when is every bit as important as having workshop capacity available to undertake the work.

UNITED UTILITIES / THOMAS HARDIE COMMERCIALS

Specialist HGV maintenance supports resilience

United Utilities has appointed Thomas Hardie Commercial to provide servicing and maintenance for approximately 35 company-owned HGVs.

The requirement includes routine maintenance, inspections and repairs to keep vehicles safe, compliant and roadworthy.

Heavy vehicles supporting utility operations can perform highly specialised duties, meaning the impact of a vehicle being unavailable may extend well beyond the fleet department.

BRENT COUNCIL / ENTERPRISE RENT-A-CAR UK

Fully maintained vehicles support frontline services

Brent Council has appointed Enterprise Rent-A-Car UK to provide fully maintained vehicle hire and associated fleet management services supporting Facilities Management, Pest Control, Caretaking and Grounds & Parks.



**TELEMATICS &
CONNECTED FLEET TECHNOLOGY**

TOGETHER HOUSING / EXEROS TECHNOLOGIES

Video telematics brings safety and fleet visibility together

Together Housing is rolling out Exeros Technologies' video telematics and

driver safety technology across its fleet of around 550 vehicles.

The deployment combines a telematics platform with a driver app and AI-enabled dashcams. Driver scoring and cloud-based incident footage will provide additional information to support coaching, accident investigation and risk management.

The development demonstrates the increasingly close relationship between conventional telematics, cameras and driver-risk management.

PLATFORM HOUSING / SAMSARA

Dashcams strengthen driver-risk management

Platform Housing has selected Samsara to provide dash camera technology under a new agreement awarded in June.

The investment illustrates how vehicle cameras are moving beyond their traditional role as evidence following

an accident. Integrated video and vehicle information can provide context around driving events, support incident investigation and help identify behaviours that may require coaching or intervention.

VIVID / EDC SYSTEMS

Real-time information supports mobile workforce

Housing provider VIVID has appointed EDC Systems to provide vehicle tracking and telematics across its company van fleet.

The requirement includes real-time vehicle location and telematics information alongside proactive reporting. For organisations operating mobile teams across dispersed locations, greater visibility can help fleet managers understand vehicle movements and utilisation while identifying opportunities to deploy resources more efficiently.



THIRTEEN HOUSING / BIGCHANGE

Continuity maintains fleet visibility

Thirteen Housing Group has renewed its use of the BigChange telematics platform for a further two years.

Retaining an established system can help avoid the disruption associated with changing platforms while maintaining access to vehicle and operational information already embedded within day-to-day fleet management.

It also demonstrates an important consideration when technology contracts

come up for renewal: replacement needs to deliver sufficient benefit to justify the operational and implementation costs associated with change.

WARWICKSHIRE POLICE

Testing technology before wider deployment

Warwickshire Police is introducing a new fleet telematics solution, with proof-of-concept and User Acceptance Testing forming part of the implementation process before wider rollout.

The approach demonstrates the importance of establishing how new technology performs within a live operational environment. For complex emergency-service fleets, successful implementation isn't simply about installing hardware; systems also need to generate useful information without creating unnecessary complexity.

DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE / UK TELEMATICS

Technology continuity protects availability

Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority has awarded UK Telematics a call-off

contract for the continued provision of vehicle telematics hardware, software and associated services.

The arrangement encompasses journey and incident data recording, driver identification, front-facing cameras, support and maintenance. The award was published on 5 August.

Continuity is particularly important where replacing installed hardware could itself take operational vehicles out of service.

METROPOLITAN POLICE / AIRMAX REMOTE

Towards a more connected fleet environment

The Metropolitan Police Service is developing a broader connected fleet environment with Airmax Remote.

The telematics platform is intended to bring vehicle information together with areas including fuel-card transactions and EV charging data, while supporting integration with workshop and other operational systems.

It is an example of telematics evolving from an individual fleet system into part of a much wider data environment.



WELSH AMBULANCE SERVICE / FORD

40 Transit Customs destined for response roles

Welsh Ambulance Services University NHS Trust has purchased 40 Ford Transit Custom 320 L2 H1 Limited vans for conversion into EMS Single Responder Vehicles.

The contract was awarded to Ford Motor Company under the CCS/GCA vehicle framework.

For emergency services, the base vehicle

is only the starting point. Conversion, equipment integration and operational specification all influence how effectively a vehicle ultimately performs in frontline service.

WELSH AMBULANCE SERVICE / CEM DAY

67 Peugeot Boxers for patient transport

In a separate major procurement, Welsh Ambulance Services University NHS Trust has purchased 67 Peugeot Boxer vans for conversion into Large Non-Emergency Patient Transport Service vehicles.

The contract was awarded to CEM Day through the CCS/GCA framework.

The scale of the order demonstrates the significant vehicle requirement sitting behind non-emergency patient transport as well as frontline emergency response.

WELSH AMBULANCE SERVICE

Specialist conversions support national resilience

Welsh Ambulance Service is also procuring specialist conversions based on Iveco Daily 7.2-tonne chassis cabs for use

as National Resilience Equipment Vehicles.

The initial requirement covers three vehicles with scope for additional conversions, demonstrating the highly specialised nature of some emergency-service fleet requirements.

Payload, equipment integration, conversion design and resilience can be considerably more important here than conventional vehicle specification alone.

SCOTTISH POLICE AUTHORITY / MERCEDES-BENZ

Framework supports police vehicle procurement

The Scottish Police Authority has made a recent vehicle purchase through the framework covering standard and specialist vehicles, with Mercedes-Benz Western Commercial selected as supplier.

Framework purchasing remains an important route for public-sector fleets, providing access to vehicles against established commercial terms without requiring a completely separate procurement exercise for every acquisition.

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VEHICLE PROCUREMENT
& REPLACEMENT

WIGAN COUNCIL

61-vehicle programme refreshes LCV fleet

Wigan Council has approved the acquisition of 61 light commercial vehicles as part of its fleet replacement programme. The investment represents a substantial refresh of operational vehicles and demonstrates the continuing importance of planned replacement in maintaining fleet reliability and availability.

Replacement also gives operators an opportunity to reassess vehicle specification against changing service requirements rather than simply replacing like-for-like.

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL / WESTERN MAXUS

Five 4x4 double-cab pick-ups strengthen operational fleet

North Lanarkshire Council has purchased five new 4x4 double-cab pick-ups through the Government Commercial Agency framework for standard and specialist vehicles.

The contract was awarded to Western Maxus.

The acquisition highlights the continuing requirement for capable 4x4 vehicles within local authority operations where conventional vans or cars may not be suitable for every working environment.

WEST LOTHIAN COUNCIL / TRUSTFORD

Six Luton vans join council operations

West Lothian Council has awarded TrustFord a contract for six 3.5-tonne Luton vans for use across council services.

Luton-bodied vehicles remain important within operational fleets where carrying volume and ease of loading can be more important than the flexibility offered by a conventional panel van.

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL / RENAULT UK

Luton vans support housing and waste

North Lanarkshire Council has also acquired four Luton vans with tail lifts to support housing decommissioning and waste and bin operations.

The specification demonstrates how

apparently conventional LCV procurement still requires careful consideration of operational use, particularly where loading, unloading and manual handling form a significant part of the working day.

RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL / LOTHIAN VEHICLE BODY BUILDERS

Specialist vehicles add operational flexibility

Renfrewshire Council has awarded contracts for specialist 7.5-tonne vehicles incorporating Multilift demountable-body systems.

Demountable systems can enable a chassis to support different operational functions, potentially increasing utilisation and providing greater flexibility than vehicles permanently dedicated to one body type.

BRENT COUNCIL / VEOLIA

Additional vehicles strengthen street-cleansing operation

Brent Council has approved additional vehicle provision within its integrated street cleansing, waste collection and winter maintenance arrangements with Veolia.

The changes include two small mechanical street sweepers alongside a trial involving an additional vehicle and two-person crew supporting Brent housing estates.

The investment illustrates how fleet requirements can evolve alongside frontline service delivery.



EV & CHARGING
INFRASTRUCTURE

AYRSHIRE COUNCILS / BELIEV

Regional approach to charging infrastructure

East Ayrshire Council, working with North Ayrshire and South Ayrshire councils, has appointed Believ to deliver a major electric vehicle charging programme

across Ayrshire.

The arrangement encompasses public charging services together with the supply and installation of associated infrastructure.

Although much of the programme concerns public charging, expansion of dependable local charging networks is increasingly relevant to fleets considering the practicalities of transitioning operational vehicles to electric.

WESTMORLAND & FURNESS COUNCIL

Depot charging prepares fleet for electrification

Westmorland & Furness Council is progressing plans for charging infrastructure at council depots and staff car parks to support electrification of its operational fleet.

For fleet operators, depot charging is fundamentally different from

simply providing workplace charging. Infrastructure has to reflect vehicle numbers, dwell times, duty cycles, electrical capacity and the need to have vehicles ready when operational teams require them. Getting those decisions right at the planning stage can help ensure charging capacity develops alongside the fleet as more operational vehicles transition to electric.

UNIVERSITY OF DUNDEE

EV charging infrastructure goes to market

The University of Dundee has also launched a procurement for EV charging infrastructure.

While outside the core local authority fleet market, the procurement reflects the wider investment taking place in workplace and institutional charging infrastructure as organisations prepare for greater numbers of electric vehicles.●

DEPOT CHARGING: GETTING THE INFRASTRUCTURE RIGHT

LEE ACKERMAN

Utilities General Manager at Connectus Utilities

Funding can help fleet operators accelerate the development of depot charging, but securing support is only one part of delivering a successful project. Grid capacity, connection lead times, site suitability, planning requirements and stakeholder involvement can all have a significant impact on cost and delivery.

With the Government's Depot Charging Scheme bringing renewed focus to charging infrastructure, Essential Fleet Manager spoke with Lee Ackerman, Utilities General Manager at Connectus Utilities, about what operators need to consider before committing to a project, the importance of early engagement with utility networks, and how fleets can prepare for future funding opportunities.

Q: Before we discuss depot charging infrastructure, could you tell us a little about your role as Utilities General Manager at Connectus Utilities and the work the company does to support organisations on their decarbonisation journey?

As Utilities General Manager at Connectus Utilities, I oversee our daily operations and align our business strategy with broader organisational goals.

Connectus Utilities supports industrial, commercial and construction clients with new utility connections, infrastructure upgrades and disconnections. Whether a project requires rooftop solar, EV charging infrastructure or integration with legacy systems, we begin with a comprehensive feasibility study to assess on-site electrical and gas capacity.

We guide clients through the costs, operational impacts and risks of their options – from minor supply upgrades to installing new substations. Our team manages the entire lifecycle, handling everything from stakeholder engagement to final installation.

Q: The Government's Depot Charging Scheme has generated significant interest across the fleet sector. From your perspective, what do you think many operators misunderstand about what the funding actually covers?

While the Depot Charging Scheme provides generous funding for

chargepoint hardware and civil works, many operators mistakenly assume it covers everything. However, the scheme does not fund grid reinforcement or connection upgrades.

Because external network upgrades are excluded, operators must factor in additional costs, the time required for grid capacity to become available and the need for stakeholder involvement.

The true timeline, scope and total cost of a depot installation can only be confirmed once the utility network is formally onboarded. Engaging utility specialists early prevents costly delays and ensures your depot is powered to support your charging infrastructure.

Q: For operators who successfully secured funding in the first application window, what should they be focusing on now to ensure their projects remain on track and avoid unnecessary delays?

To keep your project on track and avoid post-funding delays, focus on these five priority areas:

1. Finalise Technical Designs and Early Site Surveys

Lock in your electrical and mechanical designs right away. Conduct comprehensive ground and site surveys early to review existing electrical capacity, verify non-contaminated ground and identify structural constraints before ordering hardware.



Engaging **utility specialists early** prevents costly delays and **ensures your depot is powered to support your charging infrastructure.**

2. Engage Networks and Secure Connections

Immediately submit applications to local utility providers for any necessary supply upgrades, new connections or disconnections. Timelines for grid capacity approval can be lengthy, so getting into the utility queue early is imperative.

3. Onboard Stakeholders and Ensure Compliance

Bring all key stakeholders on the journey, including ground contractors, land assessors and M&E specialists, as this helps establish clear project stages. Ensure all parties – independent utility specialists and electrical contractors – hold the correct accreditations.

4. Check Planning Permissions

Review your infrastructure design against local planning requirements. If your project includes a new substation, a standard fibreglass (GRP) enclosure typically falls under permitted development, whereas custom brick-built housing usually requires formal planning permission.

5. Maintain Active Utility Project Management

Treat network onboarding as a core project management track. Maintain regular, proactive communication with utility providers and OFGEM-regulated entities to track progress, resolve

bottlenecks and manage risks throughout the installation lifecycle.

Q: Grid capacity continues to be one of the biggest barriers to fleet electrification. Why is it so important to have a grid connection strategy in place before planning depot charging infrastructure?

A successful charging project starts long before hardware arrives on site. Without early planning, capacity constraints, budget overruns and multi-month utility lead times can derail your entire rollout.

Network operators have lengthy lead times, often taking up to eight weeks just to issue a point-of-connection design and cost after your initial application. Once contracts are signed, delivery can easily take another eight weeks, with total end-to-end timelines stretching from 16 to 30 weeks, typically due to local authority requirements, legal processes and the availability of switchgear.

Crucially, grid capacity is currently allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. If a neighbouring site applies before you and claims the available local supply, you risk facing long delays for regional network upgrades or incurring massive reinforcement costs to secure additional power.

Because utility infrastructure represents a substantial capital investment,

establishing a clear strategy early gives you full visibility over these large upfront costs before you commit to hardware. It also ensures you can properly evaluate long-term energy strategy, forecasting ongoing wholesale and retail energy costs, which can be converted into a cost-per-mile analysis for when the site goes live.

Q: How can fleet operators assess whether their depot is actually ready to support the level of charging they'll need, both today and as their fleet continues to electrify?

To determine whether a depot can support current and future charging demands, fleet operators should start by conducting a comprehensive feasibility study of their existing infrastructure.

This assessment begins with a review of agreed electrical capacity against actual site usage, identifying available headroom and calculating precise electrical loadings based on future growth plans. Ensuring these load calculations are accurate prevents underestimating future supply needs or over-investing in unnecessary connections.

Operators must also evaluate physical site layouts and spatial requirements. This includes planning cable routing – which can be complex on high-traffic operational sites and identifying suitable locations for both immediate charger



installations and future expansion.

Finally, readiness depends on wider commercial and operational considerations. CAPEX availability, business growth projections and property tenure all play a critical role. For leased sites, operators must align infrastructure investment with the remaining term of their lease and long-term asset strategy.

Q: Many organisations are already looking ahead to the next Depot Charging Scheme application window. What practical steps can they take now to maximise their chances of both a successful application and successful project delivery?

To maximise the chances of a successful application and project delivery, operators should focus on proactive preparation before the next Depot Charging Scheme window opens:

Sign Up for Official Updates for guidance, opening dates and specific grant eligibility requirements – early notification allows you to move quickly the moment a funding window opens.

Conduct Site Feasibility Reviews to evaluate current electrical capacity, available supply headroom and spatial layouts – this prevents applying for funding on sites that lack the fundamental physical or electrical setup to support chargers.

Map Current Depot Capabilities Against Long-Term Vehicle Electrification Targets – this will ensure the infrastructure scope submitted in your application directly supports actual operational needs.

Be Conscious of Project Lead Times – because grant funding often operates under strict completion deadlines, establishing a realistic schedule early is critical.

Gather Necessary Documentation – site plans, landlord approvals, M&E survey results, supplier quotes and evidence of match funding. This process saves time and money, avoids rush costs and prevents submission delays.

Q: What are the most common mistakes you see organisations make when planning or delivering depot charging projects, and how can they avoid them?

The majority of the mistakes I see are around the early-stage planning steps that need to be undertaken. Most issues can be avoided by simply getting organised and getting the right people



involved at the first opportunity.

Reviewing existing infrastructure and applying to the network early to ensure there is capacity is the first priority, followed by ensuring all relevant stakeholders are onboarded. It's important to be particularly mindful of legal processes and timelines – if you leave this too late and legal advisors representing the landowners are brought in after applications have been made and costs agreed, disagreements may arise and this can cause significant delays.

Q: How important is early engagement with Distribution Network Operators (DNOs), utility providers and other stakeholders when planning depot charging infrastructure?

As previously mentioned, the application process can take around eight weeks to receive a designed cost from the network once it has been appointed. If physical assets are required, it can take 16 weeks before the infrastructure is connected.

The legal process can also be slow and complex, particularly where multiple landowners are involved. Operators also need to consider the time involved in communicating between different stakeholders. There may be other projects

in the area competing for the attention of the same organisations and working towards similar deadlines.

Q: Finally, if you could offer fleet operators one piece of advice before they embark on a depot charging project, what would it be?

It cannot be stressed enough how important it is to onboard the right specialists to support you throughout the full duration of the project. One of the biggest reasons for this is simply having the understanding and knowledge of this industry and how these schemes work.

Whether you are a logistics organisation with hundreds of vehicles or a smaller business with several vans and HGVs, having specialists to support and guide you through this process is invaluable. It can help ensure you get the most from the available funding while putting the right infrastructure in place for your long-term needs.●



connectus-utilities.co.uk



Electric Ambulances Deliver Uptime Benefits for London Fleet

London Ambulance Service is expanding its electric fleet with 77 new zero-emission vehicles, with improved reliability and reduced maintenance downtime forming an important part of the operational case for electrification.

The latest additions comprise 37 electric ambulances and 40 fast-response cars, expanding what London Ambulance Service (LAS) describes as the UK's largest fleet of fully electric ambulance vehicles.

The Service now operates 41 electric ambulances, 81 electric fast-response cars and three electric motorcycles. Around 300 vehicles within its 1,200-strong fleet can operate using electric power when fully electric and hybrid vehicles are included.

More Time on the Road

For essential service fleet operators, one of the most significant aspects of the programme is the impact LAS says electrification is having on vehicle availability.

According to the Service, its electric vehicles are quicker to maintain, cheaper to operate and more reliable, reducing the amount of time vehicles spend off the road by 75%.

Previous operational experience also

provides an indication of where those benefits can come from. LAS reported last year that an electric ambulance was quicker and cheaper to service than its diesel equivalent because it did not require oil and filter changes. During its first full year of operation, the vehicle had no breakdowns and recorded no faults with its electric components.

For an emergency fleet, where vehicle availability directly affects the ability to respond to demand, reducing time spent in workshops can therefore become as important to the electrification business case as reducing emissions or energy costs.

Meeting the Duty Cycle

Range and charging requirements remain

particularly important when electric vehicles are being introduced into operationally critical fleets.

LAS says its electric ambulances can cover a full 12-hour shift on a single charge, enabling crews to remain on the road without interrupting their shift to recharge. Earlier operational experience found that charging could also take place while vehicles were being cleaned and restocked, or at hospitals while crews handed over patients.

The vehicles are being introduced as existing diesel and other conventionally powered vehicles reach the end of their mechanical life, rather than through wholesale early replacement.

Infrastructure Growing with the Fleet

Vehicle deployment is being supported by an expanding charging network. LAS installed 288 EV chargers across 18 ambulance stations last year, with 27% of its sites fully electrified for charging. Its longer-term plan is to provide charging points across all sites by 2028.

The Service's current Green Plan also identifies charging infrastructure as an enabler of fleet electrification, including reviewing electrical capacity across sites, upgrading infrastructure to accommodate additional and higher-powered chargers, and installing fast chargers where sufficient capacity is available.

Jason Killens, Chief Executive at London Ambulance Service, said the electric vehicles are more efficient to maintain, helping to keep more ambulances available while lowering running costs. ●





Wales & West Utilities Puts Hydrogen Transit to the Test

Wales & West Utilities (WWU) has begun a 12-week trial of a prototype hydrogen fuel-cell Ford Transit as it explores alternatives to diesel for some of its most demanding operational fleet requirements.

The gas emergency and pipeline service operates around 1,300 vehicles across Wales and the south west of England. During 2025, its fleet covered more than 15 million miles and consumed 4.3 million litres of diesel, making transport a significant focus for the organisation's

decarbonisation programme.

While battery-electric vehicles can meet some of WWU's requirements, the operator says challenges remain around payload, range, towing and recharging. It also believes the UK's public charging network is not yet capable of supporting its entire operational fleet.

The hydrogen Transit will therefore be put into daily operational use around Swansea and West Wales, allowing WWU to assess its performance in a real-world utility environment.

The project team will examine range, payload, refuelling requirements and the likely operating costs of introducing hydrogen vehicles into a low-carbon fleet. Hydrogen for the trial is being supplied

by Protium Green Solutions, with the Transit refuelled at 700 bar at the Hyppo Hydrogen Solutions site in Swansea, supported by Fuel Cell Systems.

Stephen Offley, Transport Lead for WWU's Net Zero & Sustainability team, said: *"This trial demonstrates our commitment to finding the most operationally effective low-carbon solutions for our fleet whilst we continue to provide the reliable and efficient services our customers expect."*

He added that WWU believes hydrogen could have an important role in decarbonising road transport as organisations move away from fossil fuels.

Stelios Karagiorgis, Innovation Project Lead at Ford, said: *"The project would demonstrate how hydrogen fuel-cell technology could meet the 'real-world' demands of everyday fleet operations"*.

The project builds on an earlier WWU hydrogen vehicle trial and will help determine whether fuel-cell technology can meet the demands of light commercial vehicles operating in sectors such as utilities and construction.

For fleet operators, the trial also addresses a wider decarbonisation challenge: finding zero-emission alternatives for heavily utilised vehicles where long distances, significant payloads, towing requirements or limited downtime can make the transition away from diesel more difficult. ●

SP Energy Networks Expands Rapid Charging for Operational EV Fleet

Battery-buffered rapid charging technology is being rolled out across three operational sites as SP Energy Networks looks to support its growing electric fleet while maintaining vehicle availability and resilience.

SP Energy Networks is expanding its EV charging infrastructure with the deployment of TUAL PowerUp Chargers at operational sites in Middlewich, Liverpool and Cambuslang, near Glasgow.

The rollout follows a successful trial at the electricity network operator's Middlewich depot in Cheshire and is designed to help operational teams keep electric vehicles charged and ready to

respond while reducing emissions from day-to-day activities.

TUAL's PowerUp Charger combines battery energy storage with high-power DC charging, allowing ultra-rapid charging to be introduced without extensive site upgrades or significant civil engineering works.

This could be particularly valuable for operational fleets where existing grid capacity, physical site constraints or future depot plans make conventional charging infrastructure more difficult to install.

The integrated battery also provides an additional level of operational resilience, helping maintain fleet readiness should the normal power supply be disrupted. The units can also be relocated if site requirements change.

Phil Jones, District General Manager, Mid Wales and Dee Valley at SP Energy Networks, said the Middlewich trial had



demonstrated that the technology could be deployed quickly while providing the DC charging capability and resilience required by the fleet.

"Our teams work around the clock to keep power flowing and the lights on, 24/7 and 365 days a year, so it's vital that our electric fleet is ready to go at a moment's notice."

The rollout forms part of SP Energy Networks' wider investment in technology designed to decarbonise its operations without compromising the resilience and reliability required from an essential services fleet. ●



Pictured: (L to R): Ted Cliffe (Quinbrook), Christopher Thorneycroft-Smith (Aegis Energy), Lord Deben, Edmund Robins (Aegis Energy)

Construction Starts on UK's First Clean Multi-Energy Hub for Commercial Vehicles

Construction has begun on what is being described as the UK's first clean multi-energy hub for trucks and vans, with Aegis Energy's Sheffield facility scheduled to open in spring 2027.

Located at Smithywood Business Park, close to Junction 35 of the M1, the development will provide dedicated refuelling and recharging infrastructure for commercial vehicle operators, including electric charging and hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO).

Once operational, the hub will have capacity to serve more than 100 trucks and vans per day. Aegis Energy estimates that electric charging at the site could avoid up to 1.34 million tonnes of CO₂e between 2026 and 2060 compared with a diesel forecourt.*

The start of construction was marked by a ground-breaking ceremony attended by Lord Deben, Chair of the Council for Net Zero Transport and former Environment Secretary.

Supporting Commercial Fleet Decarbonisation

The development is intended to address

one of the key challenges facing operators transitioning to lower-carbon commercial vehicles: access to reliable infrastructure designed around the requirements of working fleets.

With domestic transport accounting for 31% of the UK's net greenhouse gas emissions, commercial vehicle operators are facing increasing pressure to reduce emissions while maintaining vehicle availability and operational efficiency.

The Sheffield site has been designed specifically for fleet operators, with access to major motorway and freight routes. Alongside its energy infrastructure, it will provide driver welfare facilities and secure overnight parking.

Planning permission was granted by Sheffield City Council following consultation with local stakeholders. Aegis Energy says the development is expected to generate £28.8 million in gross value added during construction and create more than 250 jobs across construction and the associated supply chain.

Building a National Network

The Sheffield development represents the first stage of Aegis Energy's plans for a national network of commercial vehicle energy hubs.

By 2030, the company aims to establish hubs connected to and serving every major motorway and freight corridor in

Great Britain, providing infrastructure to support the transition towards lower-carbon commercial transport.

Michael Shaw, CEO of Aegis Energy, said:

"Decarbonising commercial transport starts with building the right infrastructure in the right places, and Sheffield is exactly that kind of location. As our first hub moves into construction, we are taking an important step in building a national network that gives fleet operators the practical, reliable infrastructure they need to transition."

"This hub will support cleaner air, local jobs and economic growth, while strengthening the links that keep goods moving around the UK."

Lord Deben, Chair of the Council for Net Zero Transport, added:

"Freight, once a sector that was thought to be near-impossible to abate, is proving to be anything but; customers are demanding change, investment is flooding in, and new infrastructure is under way."

"Clean charging hubs will form the backbone of a new, decarbonised network of freight corridors across the UK, and I am delighted to see construction begin at Aegis Energy's project in Sheffield."

The Sheffield hub is scheduled to open in spring 2027.

*Aegis Energy calculation based on DESNZ conversion factors and annual mileage of 72,000km. ●

The Race to Install: Can Wales Keep Pace on On-Street EV Charging?

By Jarrad Morris, Founder and CEO of Fleet EV



The transition to electric vehicles is increasingly creating a new challenge: not whether motorists are prepared to make the switch, but whether they can conveniently charge when they do.

For millions of households without a driveway, that makes the availability of on-street charging critical.

England has responded with the £381 million Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) Fund, supporting local authorities to expand local charging provision, particularly for residents without access to off-street parking.

The funding has helped create momentum. Councils are moving beyond isolated charging projects towards larger, more strategic networks designed around future demand.

Wales has also made progress, but the challenge now is ensuring that progress happens quickly enough.

The Challenge for Welsh Authorities

Local authorities are operating under considerable financial pressure, with EV infrastructure competing for resources alongside many other essential services.

Yet charging provision is becoming an increasingly important part of local transport infrastructure. It also has a role to play in supporting wider decarbonisation objectives and enabling more motorists to consider switching to electric vehicles.

The issue is particularly significant for households without off-street parking. These motorists cannot simply install a home charger and plug in overnight.

Without sufficient public provision, there is a danger of creating a two-tier transition in which adopting an EV is considerably easier for people with driveways than for those reliant on street parking.

If electrification is to be genuinely accessible, charging infrastructure has to work for both.

Spend Smarter, Not Simply More

Closing that gap is not solely about spending more money. It is also about making better use of the investment available.

Successful charging programmes require collaboration between government, local authorities and experienced charge point operators, combining public policy objectives with an understanding of the technical and commercial realities of operating infrastructure over the long term.

There is no single model that will work everywhere. Streets differ, as do parking patterns, travel behaviour, local demand and available electrical capacity.

Deployment therefore needs to focus on putting appropriate chargers where people are most likely to need and use them, backed by realistic utilisation forecasts and plans for ongoing maintenance.

Installing charge points is only part of the solution. They also need to be accessible, reliable and located where they can become part of residents' everyday lives.

From Individual Projects to Wider Networks

Wales already has examples of what can be achieved.

Cardiff's on-street charging programme demonstrates how local authorities can work with charge point operators to increase provision for residents who cannot charge at home.

The challenge is taking lessons from successful individual schemes and creating the conditions for similar projects to be delivered more widely.

That requires councils to have sufficient certainty to plan beyond individual funding rounds and develop charging networks around anticipated long-term demand.

There are broader benefits too. Public charging can attract private investment, support jobs and skills, encourage EV adoption and give businesses greater confidence in the transition to electric transport.

Reliable charging can also support town centres and other destinations by making them easier for EV drivers to visit.

Charging infrastructure should therefore no longer be viewed simply as an addition to the transport network. Increasingly, it is becoming part of the infrastructure communities will expect to have available.

Keeping Pace With the Transition

The race to install charge points is not ultimately about which nation can announce the largest number of chargers or the most ambitious target.

Success will be determined by whether drivers can find reliable and convenient charging where they actually need it.

England's LEVI programme demonstrates what can happen when long-term funding is combined with local authority delivery and private-sector expertise.

Wales has shown that it can deliver successful schemes too. The next challenge is scale: giving local authorities the certainty, investment and delivery support required to extend provision across more communities.

Because the transition will not be delivered by targets alone.

It will happen one charge point, one street and one community at a time. ●

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Van Guard Becomes bott as Integration Enters its Next Chapter

Following its acquisition by bott in March 2025, Van Guard Accessories is announcing the next milestone in its journey, with the business transitioning to the bott brand.

The move brings together two established names in the commercial vehicle industry under a single brand, creating a stronger, more comprehensive offering while building on the reputation, expertise and service both businesses have developed over many years.

The transition follows 17 months of successful integration and reinforces bott's position as a leading provider of complete commercial vehicle solutions.

Customers will begin to see the familiar Van Guard black and yellow branding transition to the Bott Group's signature green as part of a phased rollout. Van Guard-branded products will remain available throughout 2026, with product branding and packaging transitioning to bott during 2027, ensuring a smooth and seamless experience for customers and distribution partners.

While the name is changing, the expertise behind it is not. Customers will continue to work with the same trusted teams and benefit from the high-quality products, technical knowledge and customer support that have made Van Guard one of the UK's leading manufacturers of commercial vehicle roof storage, ladder handling, vehicle access and

security solutions.

Bringing Van Guard fully into the bott brand creates a genuine one-stop shop for commercial vehicle solutions, combining bott's expertise in vehicle conversions, storage systems and fleet solutions with Van Guard's market-leading roof storage, ladder handling and vehicle security products.

Nick Smith, CEO at bott UK, said:

"This is the natural next step in bringing together two highly complementary businesses. Over the past 17 months we've combined our expertise, our people and our capabilities, enabling us to offer customers a more complete commercial vehicle solution than ever before."

"Customers can now source more of their vehicle requirements from one supplier, simplifying procurement while benefiting from the engineering excellence and customer service both businesses are known for."

The addition of Van Guard's vehicle security range has also strengthened the combined offering, enabling bott to provide complete vehicle security solutions alongside its established conversion and storage systems.

Ashley Rote, Finance Director, said:

"This is much more than a change of name. It reflects the successful integration of two like-minded businesses and our shared ambition for the future."

"Customers will continue to receive the same



high levels of service and expertise, while benefiting from a broader product portfolio, increased investment in innovation and a more complete commercial vehicle offering."

The brand transition also supports future growth, with increased investment in product development and an expanded innovation programme. Customers can expect refreshed product ranges and new additions throughout 2027 as the combined business continues to evolve its offering.

The unified bott brand will be showcased at IAA Transportation in Hanover this September, where visitors will be able to see the expanded commercial vehicle portfolio.

As the business enters this new chapter, customers can look forward to the same trusted expertise and service, now backed by a broader product portfolio, greater engineering capability and the strength of one united brand. ●



Bradshaw EV Appointed UK Distributor for Tenax Electric Cleaning Machines

Bradshaw EV has been appointed the official UK distributor for Tenax cleaning machines, expanding its range of specialist electric vehicles and sustainable street-cleaning equipment.

The new partnership will see Bradshaw EV represent Tenax's range of 100% electric road sweepers and street washers in the UK, bringing together two businesses with a strong focus on electrification and specialist vehicle applications.

The appointment comes during Bradshaw's 50th anniversary year. Since its establishment in 1976, the company has developed a broad portfolio of electric vehicles and equipment for applications including municipal operations, waste collection, grounds maintenance and facilities management.

The Tenax range available through Bradshaw EV includes the Eccar, MaxWind, MaxWind Hydro, SmartWind and Electra 2.0 Evos, providing cleaning solutions for applications ranging from pedestrian areas and town centres to larger public spaces and street-cleaning operations.

Expanding the Electric Cleaning Portfolio

Tenax specialises in the design and manufacture of low-voltage, fully electric road sweepers and street washers. With

more than 35 years of experience and a presence in more than 42 countries, the manufacturer has established an international customer base within the professional cleaning sector.

Its machines have been developed around electric power rather than adapting conventional diesel equipment to electric operation, providing zero-tailpipe-emission alternatives for organisations operating in streets, pedestrian areas and other public environments.

The addition of Tenax significantly expands Bradshaw EV's existing street-cleaning offering. The company already supplies its own range of electric vehicles alongside products from Goupil and Glutton.

Together, the brands enable Bradshaw EV to offer equipment covering cleansing, waste collection, grounds maintenance and wider urban operations.

For local authorities, contractors, facilities management providers and other fleet operators, the expanded portfolio also provides an opportunity to source different types of specialist electric equipment through a single supplier.

Supporting the Transition to Electric Equipment

Bradshaw EV has extensive experience supplying battery-powered vehicles for specialist applications and works with organisations looking to reduce emissions and noise while replacing conventionally powered equipment.

Electric cleaning machines can be particularly relevant where vehicles and equipment operate for extended periods around pedestrians or in noise-

sensitive locations. Applications can include town and city centres, housing estates, hospitals, campuses, business parks, transport environments and leisure destinations.

Ramsy Labassi, Marketing Manager at Bradshaw EV, said: "Tenax is an excellent fit for Bradshaw EV. We have always focused on supplying proven electric vehicles from established manufacturers, and Tenax shares that same commitment to developing practical, high-quality electric solutions.

"The addition of Tenax gives us an even more comprehensive street-cleaning portfolio. Alongside Bradshaw vehicles, Goupil and Glutton, we can now offer customers an extensive choice of equipment designed for different environments and operational requirements.

"This is also a particularly exciting announcement for us as Bradshaw celebrates its 50th anniversary. It is a great example of how we continue to build on five decades of experience while expanding our portfolio with innovative electric solutions for the future.

"As organisations continue to look for ways to reduce their environmental impact and move away from fossil-fuel-powered equipment, having access to genuinely 100% electric cleaning machines is increasingly important. We are delighted to be representing Tenax in the UK."

The distribution agreement represents a further expansion of Bradshaw EV's specialist electric vehicle offering and gives UK fleet operators access to a wider range of purpose-designed electric equipment for street cleansing and municipal operations. ●



Amanda Cunningham, Director of Fleet Relationships at FMG

Fleet Logistics extends long-term partnership with FMG

Fleet Logistics, the experts in mobility management, have renewed their longstanding partnership with FMG

for the ongoing provision of incident management services to their fleet customers.

And they credit the importance of effective account management for the strength and success of the relationship which is in its second decade.

Since 2010 FMG has delivered a range of services including first notification of loss, uninsured loss recovery, non-fault hire and a bespoke total loss solution, allowing Fleet Logistics' customers to select any combination of those services as required.

As part of ZIGUP, the leading integrated mobility solutions provider, FMG benefits from the scale, expertise and financial strength of a FTSE 250 listed business, supporting ongoing investment in innovation, service capability and solutions that help customers minimise disruption, improve driver experiences and keep vehicles moving.

Sue Branston, Country Head at Fleet Logistics said, "We specialise in creating effective fleet programmes for our customers, with bundled or unbundled

services to meet their specific needs, and FMG play a key role in this flexible service delivery. They take time to get to know and thoroughly understand our customers' needs and then provide objective and data-driven advice and tailored solutions to support the seamless running of their fleets. FMG's account management team are extremely diligent and responsive, proactively and passionately supporting our customers, and this makes our contract renewal a logical decision."

Amanda Cunningham, Director of Fleet Relationships at FMG said, "We're incredibly proud that Fleet Logistics have once again renewed their incident management contract with us and we look forward to continuing this successful partnership. Our businesses share a rich history and an unwavering commitment to delivering driver satisfaction and cost control alongside every customer's unique setup. Together we're shaping a great future for Fleet Logistics' customers through flexible solutions, clear communication and dedicated and responsive customer support." ●

Farizon Announces Europcar Vehicle Replacement Service

Electric van manufacturer Farizon has partnered with Europcar Mobility Group UK to provide a vehicle replacement service for its customers.

If a Farizon customer's SV or V7E van cannot be repaired at the roadside, a replacement SV will be provided within two days of the incident.

This vehicle replacement service will run for the length of the customer's warranty, with a four-year/120,000-mile warranty included with the SV, and a five-year/120,000-mile warranty with the V7E.

Europcar will hold an initial fleet of ten Farizon SV L1H1 models at strategic locations around the UK, which means it will be able to quickly deliver vans when required.

With more than 70% of its network equipped with EV charging, vehicles will be provided with at least an 80% charge at the start of a loan.

The SV van delivers a WLTP range of up to 247 miles – WLTP combined cycle – while



a 20 to 80 per cent top-up charge can be completed in 36 minutes.

It is available with the option of 67 kWh, 83 kWh or 106 kWh batteries, and its all-electric powertrain produces 170 kW (231 PS) of power and 336 Nm of torque.

Andrew Grigor, Head of Aftersales at Farizon Auto UK, said: "While our vans are

built for business, we've set out to ensure our aftersales offering provides the service our fleet and retail customers expect.

"With its commitment to electric mobility, as well as its strong reputation in the insurance and roadside assistance replacement vehicle sector, we identified Europcar as the best partner to help us deliver a vehicle replacement service." ●

TMC and SureCam Unveil Integrated Video-and Mileage-Capture for Company Cars and Grey Fleet

The Miles Consultancy (TMC) and SureCam have partnered to launch an industry first for company car and grey fleet operations that captures video evidence and HMRC-ready business mileage in a single system. MilesSecure integrates TMC's Mileage+ service with a specially designed dashcam from SureCam that overcomes driver privacy concerns by providing video only on demand. The result is a car fleet technology solution that removes the administrative burden of mileage claims, cuts fuel and insurance costs, and improves risk management.

"Privacy is the single biggest hurdle to the adoption of video telematics in the car fleet sector, so we have teamed up with SureCam to develop an integrated camera system that alleviates driver concerns while delivering proven cost and performance benefits," explains Barry Monks, Director of The Miles Consultancy. "We have listened to our customers to understand the fleet challenges they face and shape MilesSecure



to meet their precise requirements."

MilesSecure automatically captures mileage using accurate telematics data from the SureCam device. Drivers can toggle between business and private trips in seconds via the Mileage+ app or online portal, and when a journey is classified as personal, start and end locations are immediately deleted with only total mileage details retained. Payroll reimbursements and deductions are then calculated based on data directly from a fuel/EV payment card or uploaded receipts, alongside audited, HMRC-ready compliance reporting. A data integration is also available with leading expenses system, SAP Concur.

The on-demand dashcam supports the claims management process when a collision occurs, but unlike many other

video telematics solutions, no driver behaviour or incident alerts are triggered. The simplified camera does not include any in-vehicle video or audio capture, providing peace of mind to the driver that their privacy is fully protected. This means car fleets can access video evidence when required to defend against fraudulent claims or keep at-fault claims costs to a minimum.

Sam Footer, Partnership Director at SureCam commented: *"Our research tells us that company car and grey fleet vehicles represent as big an insurance risk to companies as vans, HGVs and specialist vehicles, and yet, most have avoided using connected dashcams due to privacy issues. MilesSecure overcomes all driver concerns, making video telematics a viable option for the first time, while providing the added benefits of a mileage capture solution."*●

FUSO Truck UK Appointed New General Distributor for Great Britain

Daimler Truck UK and Mitsubishi Fuso Truck and Bus Corporation (MFTBC) have appointed FUSO Truck UK Ltd (FTUK) as the new General Distributor for FUSO products across Great Britain, effective from 1 October 2026.

Led by Chairman and Owner Sid Sadique OBE and Managing Director David Hamer, FTUK will take responsibility for FUSO sales and customer services across the British market, operating from its headquarters at the Wentworth Park complex in Barnsley.

The company will work with a newly appointed dealer network to support the development of the FUSO brand and strengthen its position within the UK. Further details of the network and market strategy will be announced in due course.

Richard Skidmore, Managing Director of Daimler Truck UK, said the two organisations had worked closely to establish a strong operational framework during the transition.

"We are confident that FUSO Truck UK is well positioned to build on the brand's established presence in the market and deliver continued growth in the years ahead."

Sid Sadique OBE said the new business would be dedicated specifically to the Mitsubishi FUSO product range, supported by a service-focused dealer network and new management team.



The appointment forms part of the reorganisation of FUSO's European business following the integration of the FUSO and Hino brands under new holding company ARCHION. MFTBC says the new distribution structure will further strengthen FUSO's European sales and service network and its long-term commitment to customers in Great Britain.●



When the Road Runs Out

For most fleet vehicles, the road provides a relatively predictable operating environment. But for fleets providing essential services, the job does not always end where the tarmac does.

Vehicles may need to cross construction sites, unmade tracks, fields and forestry roads, reach remote infrastructure or continue operating during snow, flooding and other severe weather.

In these environments, four-wheel drive can provide valuable additional capability. But choosing the right vehicle involves considerably more than looking for a 4x4 badge.

The vehicle must still carry the people, tools and equipment needed to complete the job, potentially tow additional equipment and operate legally and safely within its permitted weights.

For fleet operators, the starting point should therefore always be the job – not the vehicle.

Why Choose 4WD?

The principal benefit of four-wheel drive is improved traction.

With a conventional two-wheel-drive vehicle, drive is provided through one axle. When those driven wheels encounter mud, wet grass, loose gravel, snow or another low-grip surface, the ability to keep moving can quickly become limited.

A 4WD system allows drive to be delivered through both axles, increasing the opportunity to make use of the available tyre grip.

For an operational fleet, this can make the difference between reaching a remote worksite and becoming immobilised on the way.

It can be particularly valuable for vehicles carrying equipment or towing trailers, where additional weight places greater demands on available traction.

Four-wheel drive doesn't make a vehicle impossible to get stuck, but it can provide greater operational resilience where difficult conditions form a regular part of the working day.

4WD, 4x4 or AWD?

The terms 4WD and 4x4 are frequently used interchangeably. Technically, 4x4 describes a vehicle with four wheels where all four can be driven, while 4WD

refers to the drivetrain that enables this.

For fleet operators, the more important question is how the system actually works.

Many traditional working pick-ups use selectable four-wheel drive. The vehicle can operate in two-wheel drive during normal road use, with the driver selecting 4WD when additional traction is required.

Some also provide low-range gearing, giving greater control at low speeds when negotiating steep gradients, deep mud or heavily rutted tracks.

Full-time 4WD systems can drive all four wheels continuously, while all-wheel-drive (AWD) systems commonly use electronic control to vary the amount of drive sent to each axle as conditions change.

AWD can provide excellent additional traction on wet roads, gravel, snow and moderately difficult surfaces, but it should not automatically be considered equivalent to a traditional working 4x4.

A road-focused AWD vehicle may lack low-range gearing, differential locks, sufficient ground clearance or the approach and departure angles required for more demanding terrain.



"For fleet operators, the starting point should always be the job – not the vehicle."

Which Type of Vehicle?

Once the duty cycle has been established, fleet operators can determine what type of vehicle is most appropriate.

Working Pick-Ups

Pick-ups remain one of the most obvious choices for operational fleets regularly working away from surfaced roads.

Vehicles such as the Ford Ranger, Toyota Hilux, Isuzu D-Max and KGM Musso combine four-wheel-drive capability with load-carrying capacity, towing ability and crew accommodation.

A separate load bed is particularly useful where dirty, wet or bulky equipment needs to be kept away from occupants, while canopies, racking and other conversions can adapt the vehicle for specialist roles.

Many working pick-ups can also tow up to 3,500kg, depending on model and specification, making them particularly relevant for fleets transporting trailers, plant, generators and other equipment.

4WD and AWD Vans

Where enclosed, secure load space takes priority, a van may be more appropriate. Vehicles within ranges such as the Ford Transit, Mercedes-Benz Sprinter, Volkswagen Transporter and MAN TGE illustrate the types of van that can be

offered with enhanced traction, AWD or 4WD configurations, depending on the particular model and market availability.

For engineers and mobile service teams, a van provides space for racking, tools, parts and specialist equipment while protecting the load from weather and theft.

This type of vehicle can be particularly useful where most mileage takes place on the highway but drivers regularly need to negotiate construction sites, gravel tracks or unmade access roads.

However, drivetrain alone should not determine suitability. Ground clearance, wheelbase and vehicle overhangs can become significant once the vehicle leaves a relatively level surface.

Look Beyond Four-Wheel Drive

A 4x4 drivetrain is only one component of an off-road vehicle specification.

Ground clearance determines how effectively a vehicle can negotiate ruts, rocks and uneven surfaces without grounding or damaging components underneath.

Approach and departure angles influence the gradients and obstacles a vehicle can negotiate without its front or rear making contact with the ground.

Wading depth may also be relevant for fleets operating in areas susceptible

to standing water, although a manufacturer's quoted figure should never be interpreted as an instruction to enter floodwater.

Differential locks and electronic traction systems can provide further assistance where individual wheels lose grip, while increasingly sophisticated terrain modes can alter throttle response, transmission behaviour and traction control to suit different surfaces.

Tyres Matter

Even the most sophisticated 4WD system cannot create grip where the tyres cannot find it.

Tyre selection should therefore form part of the vehicle specification rather than being considered afterwards.

A road-focused tyre designed primarily for low noise and efficiency will behave differently on deep mud or loose ground from an appropriate all-terrain tyre.

There is inevitably a compromise, particularly for vehicles that cover substantial highway mileage, so the tyre specification should reflect the balance between road and off-road use.

Payload and Towing

One of the easiest mistakes is to concentrate on terrain capability while overlooking what the vehicle needs to carry.

Tools, equipment, PPE, spare parts, drivers and passengers all consume payload. So do racking, canopies, winches, tow bars and additional vehicle protection.

Fleet operators should therefore calculate payload using the completed operational vehicle, not simply the manufacturer's base specification.

Towing requires similar consideration.

Four-wheel drive can provide useful additional traction when moving a vehicle and trailer across loose or slippery surfaces, but it doesn't increase the manufacturer's permitted towing capacity.

Vehicle weight, trailer weight, payload, gross train weight, tyres, braking and driver competence all remain important.



A headline 3,500kg towing capacity does not automatically mean towing that weight across difficult terrain is appropriate for every operation.

The Driver is Part of the Specification

A highly capable 4x4 in the hands of an inexperienced driver can still present considerable risk.

Driving on mud, loose surfaces, steep gradients or heavily rutted tracks requires different skills from conventional road driving.

Drivers need to understand when to engage four-wheel drive, how terrain modes operate and when low range or differential locks should and should not be used.

Most importantly, they need to recognise when conditions exceed either the vehicle's capability or their own experience.

Good off-road training isn't simply about teaching someone how to negotiate difficult terrain. It is also about knowing when not to attempt it.

Electrification is Expanding the Choice

Electrification is beginning to change the working 4x4 market.

The Ford Ranger Plug-in Hybrid provides an electrified option within the pick-up sector, while fully electric models such as the Isuzu D-Max EV and Toyota Hilux BEV demonstrate how battery-electric power is moving into applications traditionally dominated by diesel.

The same fit-for-purpose principles apply,

but fleet operators must also consider the impact of payload, towing, difficult terrain, temperature and auxiliary equipment on energy consumption.

For remote operations, the important figure isn't simply the vehicle's published range. It is whether there is sufficient usable energy to reach the location, complete the work and return with an appropriate operational margin.

When the Road Runs Out

Four-wheel drive can give operational fleets greater traction, versatility and resilience, but it should never create a false sense of security.

A 4WD vehicle can still lose grip, become grounded or get stuck. Four driven wheels don't necessarily enable a vehicle to stop more quickly on snow, ice or another slippery surface either.

For fleet operators, simply putting "4x4 required" into a vehicle specification may therefore not go far enough.

The right vehicle could be a working pick-up, an AWD van, a compact off-roader or a highly specialised 4x4. What matters is matching the drivetrain, payload, towing capability, tyres, ground clearance and equipment to the actual operating environment – and ensuring the people behind the wheel understand how to use that capability.

The question should never simply be:

"Do we need a 4x4?"

It should be:

"What does this vehicle need to do when the road runs out?"

Four Working Pick-Ups Compared

For many operational fleets, the answer will be a pick-up.

Their combination of crew accommodation, a separate load area, substantial towing capability and four-wheel drive makes them particularly relevant to utilities, highways, construction, telecommunications, environmental services and other operations that regularly take vehicles beyond conventional roads.

But the choice is becoming more complex. Diesel remains important for demanding workloads and remote operations, while plug-in hybrid and fully electric models are introducing new options and, in some cases, very different payload, towing and range capabilities.

Specification also extends beyond the base vehicle. Hardtops, canopies, storage systems, warning lighting, tow bars, roof-mounted equipment and specialist conversions can all transform a pick-up for a particular role, but they also add weight and reduce the payload available for people, tools and materials.

Over the following pages, we take a look at the Ford Ranger, Isuzu D-Max, Toyota Hilux and KGM Musso, focusing not simply on which is 'best', but on where their different capabilities could make them the right fit for the job. ●

TOYOTA HILUX

A New Generation of a Familiar Workhorse

The ninth-generation Toyota Hilux brings significant changes to one of the world's best-established working pick-ups.


1,065kg

MAX PAYLOAD*

3,500kg

MAX TOWING*

700mm

WADING DEPTH

309mm

GROUND CLEARANCE

DIESEL 48V | BEV

POWERTRAINS

With the new generation, Hilux takes a significant step further into electrification, with the first fully electric model joining the Diesel 48V. For operational fleets, the two powertrains offer distinctly different working propositions.

But the fundamental questions remain the same: what can it carry, what can it tow and where can it go?

HILUX DIESEL 48V

The Diesel 48V retains the substantial working capability expected of Hilux, combining its established diesel powertrain with Toyota's 48V mild-hybrid technology.

Depending on grade, payload ranges from 1,035kg to 1,065kg, while maximum braked towing capacity remains 3,500kg.

Wading depth is 700mm and minimum running ground clearance is 309mm, maintaining important capabilities for vehicles operating away from surfaced roads and accessing more difficult locations.

For fleets regularly towing substantial trailers, carrying heavy equipment or operating for extended periods in remote areas, Diesel 48V is therefore likely to remain an important option.

HILUX BEV

The fully electric Hilux presents a noticeably different proposition and should not simply be regarded as a direct replacement for the Diesel 48V in every operational role.

Its 59.2kWh lithium-ion battery supplies

front and rear eAxes, providing permanent all-wheel drive.

Toyota quotes a payload of up to 715kg and maximum braked towing capacity of 1,600kg, together with a WLTP combined driving range of up to 160 miles. Those figures create a different working profile from the diesel model.

Importantly for fleets operating away from the road, the BEV retains the Hilux's 700mm wading depth. Ground clearance is 212mm and a dedicated Multi-Terrain Select system uses braking and torque control to assist progress in challenging conditions.

A utility inspection vehicle carrying engineers and relatively light equipment, operating predictable daily mileage and returning regularly to a depot could present a credible electrification opportunity. A vehicle expected to carry heavier equipment or tow a 3.5-tonne trailer into remote locations clearly presents a very different requirement.

Payload, towing, route, terrain and access to charging therefore need to be considered together when establishing whether the BEV fits the duty cycle.

TWO-SEAT CONVERSION

Toyota has also introduced a two-seat conversion for both Diesel 48V and battery-electric Hilux models.

The factory conversion removes the rear seats to create a large, flat and secure internal load area, providing useful additional carrying space for fleets that do not regularly require a rear crew.

HILUX - KEY CAPABILITY

DIESEL 48V

Payload: 1,035–1,065kg*

Towing: up to 3,500kg*

Wading depth: 700mm

Ground clearance: 309mm

Drive: 4WD

BEV

Battery: 59.2kWh

Payload: up to 715kg*

Towing: up to 1,600kg*

Wading depth: 700mm

Ground clearance: 212mm

Drive: Permanent AWD

WLTP combined range: up to 160 miles

Powertrains: Diesel 48V / Electric

**Figures vary according to derivative, specification, equipment fitted, load and operating conditions.*

WHY CONSIDER IT

A proven working pick-up with strong off-road capability and, in Diesel 48V form, one-tonne-plus payload and 3.5-tonne towing capacity. The new Hilux BEV provides a fully electric alternative for suitable duty cycles, while the availability of a two-seat conversion across both powertrains adds further flexibility for operational fleets.●

FORD RANGER

Capability Across a Broad Range

The Ford Ranger combines strong load-carrying and towing capability with four-wheel drive, extensive derivative choice and, with the PHEV, the option to electrify suitable parts of the working day.



Up to 1 tonne*
MAX PAYLOAD*

3,500kg
MAX TOWING*

800mm
WADING DEPTH

4WD
LOW RANGE AVAILABLE

DIESEL | PHEV
POWERTRAINS

For fleet operators, that breadth of choice makes it particularly important to look beyond the Ranger name and specify the vehicle according to the job it will actually perform.

For the purposes of demanding operational use, the key considerations remain payload, towing requirements, terrain, daily mileage and the equipment the vehicle needs to carry.

RANGER DIESEL

Diesel remains an important option for fleets covering longer distances, regularly towing heavy trailers or travelling into remote locations where access to charging may be limited.

Depending on derivative, Ranger offers one-tonne-class payload capability, while selected versions can tow up to 3,500kg.

Four-wheel drive, low-range gearing and a range of available off-road technologies provide the capability required for more demanding working environments, although the precise specification varies considerably across the Ranger range.

This is important for fleet operators.

A Ranger selected primarily for maximum payload and towing presents a different proposition from a derivative designed around enhanced off-road performance, equipment or passenger comfort.

The vehicle therefore needs to be assessed at derivative level rather than assuming that every Ranger offers identical working capability.

RANGER PHEV

The Ranger Plug-in Hybrid adds another option for fleets wanting to introduce

electrification without moving to a fully electric pick-up.

It combines a 2.3-litre EcoBoost petrol engine with an electric motor and rechargeable battery, producing 279PS and up to 690Nm of torque.

Crucially for working fleets, Ranger PHEV retains payload capability of up to one tonne and maximum braked towing capacity of 3,500kg, depending on derivative and specification.

Electric-only range is up to approximately 27 miles, allowing suitable parts of the working day to be completed using electric power while retaining the flexibility of a combustion engine for longer journeys, towing and more remote operations.

POWERING THE JOB

One of the PHEV's most interesting features for operational fleets is Pro Power Onboard.

Available with up to 6.9kW of output, the system allows electrical tools and equipment to be powered directly from the vehicle.

For utilities, highways, construction and mobile maintenance operations, this could reduce the need to transport and operate a separate generator.

RANGER 2-SEAT

Ford also offers a Ranger 2-Seat for operators that require greater secure internal carrying space rather than a second row of passenger seats.

The conversion replaces the rear seating with a dedicated load area, providing another option for fleets that need the capability of a pick-up but primarily use the vehicle as a working tool.

RANGER - KEY CAPABILITY

DIESEL

Payload: Up to approximately 1 tonne, derivative dependent*

Towing: up to 3,500kg*

Drive: 4WD available across working derivatives

Powertrains: Diesel / Plug-in Hybrid

Ranger PHEV

Power: 279PS

Torque: up to 690Nm

Payload: up to 1 tonne*

Towing: up to 3,500kg*

Electric-only range: up to approximately 27 miles*

Pro Power Onboard: up to 6.9kW

**Capabilities vary significantly according to derivative, powertrain, specification, options and equipment fitted. Operators should check the technical specification of the individual Ranger derivative against the intended duty cycle.*

WHY CONSIDER IT

Broad choice of derivatives for different operational roles, strong towing and off-road capability, plus a PHEV option that offers one-tonne-class payload and 3,500kg towing while adding electric-only driving and Pro Power Onboard. ●

KGM MUSSO

Load Carrying, Towing – and Electric Choice

The KGM Musso offers strong load-carrying and towing capability in diesel form, while the Musso EV introduces an all-electric alternative with a distinctly different set of working capabilities.



1,205kg
MAX PAYLOAD*

3,500kg
MAX TOWING*

300mm
WADING DEPTH

DIESEL | EV
POWERTRAINS

For operational fleets, the Musso range presents two quite different working propositions. The diesel provides the greater payload and towing capability for more demanding duties, while the Musso EV introduces a fully electric alternative for operations where loads, towing requirements and daily mileage are more predictable.

MUSSO DIESEL

The Musso is powered by a 2.2-litre turbo-diesel engine and combines five-seat crew accommodation with the separate load deck and towing capability expected from a working pick-up.

KGM quotes a maximum towing capacity of 3,500kg, together with a 1,025kg payload limit while towing. Its selectable four-wheel-drive system allows the driver to choose the appropriate drive mode according to the road, surface and operating conditions.

That combination makes the diesel particularly relevant to fleets whose vehicles need to perform several roles during the same working day. A vehicle may need to transport a crew and equipment to site, operate on unsurfaced or difficult ground and tow plant, machinery or other equipment.

For operators requiring greater load-bed capacity, the long-bed Saracen+ extends the load area by 310mm and provides an additional 200kg of payload compared with the standard version. The extra space could be particularly useful where bulky equipment is carried regularly and load-bed dimensions are as important as the headline payload figure.

KGM also offers Farming, Workman and Lifestyle accessory packs, providing scope to configure the vehicle around different operational requirements. This can be useful for fleets looking for a more role-specific vehicle without moving immediately to a fully bespoke conversion.

As with any accessory package or conversion, however, fleets need to consider the cumulative weight of everything fitted to the vehicle. Canopies, tow bars, storage, warning equipment and other additions all contribute to vehicle weight and can reduce the payload available for people, tools and materials.

MUSSO EV

The Musso EV presents a noticeably different proposition and should not simply be viewed as an electric equivalent of the diesel model.

Its 80.6kWh battery and electric drivetrain provide full-time all-wheel drive, while KGM quotes 339Nm of torque. This retains the all-wheel-drive format that many operational users will expect from a pick-up, but its carrying and towing limits create a different working profile.

Payload is up to 690kg and maximum braked towing capacity is 2,300kg, meaning its load-carrying and towing characteristics are substantially different from those of the diesel Musso.

For fleets, that distinction is important. An electric pick-up may offer sufficient range and performance for a particular operation, but suitability also depends on what the vehicle is expected to carry and tow throughout the working day.

MUSSO - KEY CAPABILITY

DIESEL

Engine: 2.2-litre diesel

Payload: 1,025kg while towing*

Towing: up to 3,500kg*

Drive: 4WD

Configuration: Five-seat crew cab

SARACEN+

Load bed: 310mm longer than standard Musso

Additional payload: 200kg

MUSSO EV

Battery: 80.6kWh

Payload: up to 690kg*

Towing: up to 2,300kg*

Torque: 339Nm

Drive: Full-time AWD

WLTP combined range: up to 240 miles*

**Figures vary according to derivative, specification, equipment fitted, load and operating conditions.*

WHY CONSIDER IT

A work-focused pick-up offering strong payload and towing capability in diesel form, including the long-bed Saracen+. The Musso EV provides a distinctly different alternative for fleets with lighter loads, lower towing requirements and predictable duty cycles.●

ISUZU D-MAX

Built for Work, with More Choice

The Isuzu D-Max combines established working capability with diesel, Commercial and fully electric options for different fleet requirements.



1,000+kg
MAX PAYLOAD*

3,500kg
MAX TOWING*

800mm
WADING DEPTH

240mm
GROUND CLEARANCE

DIESEL | EV
POWERTRAINS

D-MAX DIESEL

The D-Max has traditionally occupied the work-focused end of the pick-up market, making it particularly relevant to operational fleets.

The latest 2.2-litre bi-turbo diesel produces 163PS and 400Nm of torque, while Isuzu quotes a payload of more than one tonne and maximum towing capacity of up to 3,500kg.

On the D-Max DL20 Double Cab, ground clearance is 240mm, with a 30.5-degree approach angle, 24.2-degree departure angle and 800mm wading depth.

Rough Terrain Mode provides additional electronic traction assistance, while the DL20 incorporates a rear differential lock and shift-on-the-fly four-wheel drive. Drivers can switch between high-range two- and four-wheel drive at speeds of up to 62mph, with low range available for more demanding conditions.

That combination makes the diesel D-Max particularly relevant where off-road use forms a regular part of the vehicle's job.

COMMERCIAL

Isuzu also offers Commercial versions of the D-Max, providing a two-seat conversion with additional secure carrying space.

The conversion retains the four-door Double Cab body but removes the rear seats and seat belts, replacing them with a flat phenolic load floor. A solid bulkhead with a mesh viewing screen separates the load area from the front seats, while darkened rear windows provide additional security.

The conversion complements the conventional load bed, creating two

carrying areas for tools and equipment. A bedliner, towbar and canopy can also be specified to suit different requirements.

With a payload of more than one tonne, towing capacity of up to 3,500kg and four-wheel-drive capability, it provides an alternative for operators wanting Double Cab access with additional secure internal carrying space.

EV

The D-Max EV takes Isuzu's working pick-up into fully electric territory while retaining many of the capabilities required by operational fleets.

Its dual-motor drivetrain uses front and rear e-Axles to provide full-time four-wheel drive, while a 66.9kWh battery provides a WLTP range of approximately 163 miles.

Significantly, the EV retains a payload of more than one tonne and maximum braked towing capacity of up to 3,500kg – important capabilities for fleets considering an electric working pick-up.

There are differences away from the road, however. While the diesel DL20 Double Cab offers 240mm ground clearance and an 800mm wading depth, the EV provides 210mm and 600mm respectively.

Range and charging also need consideration, together with the effects of payload, towing, terrain and temperature on real-world energy consumption.

For predictable duty cycles with regular depot returns, the D-Max EV could make an interesting proposition. Where vehicles travel longer distances into remote locations, charging is limited or demanding off-road conditions are a regular requirement, the diesel may offer greater operational flexibility.

D-MAX - KEY CAPABILITY

DIESEL

Payload: more than 1 tonne*

Towing: up to 3,500kg*

Ground clearance: up to 240mm*

Wading depth: up to 800mm*

Drive: Selectable 4WD

Engine: 2.2-litre bi-turbo diesel

Power: 163PS | Torque: 400Nm

COMMERCIAL

Available as: DL20, DL40 and V-Cross Double Cab

Payload: more than 1 tonne*

Towing: up to 3,500kg*

Configuration: Two seats with additional internal load area

Drive: Selectable 4WD

EV

Battery: 66.9kWh

WLTP range: 263km / approximately 163 miles

Payload: more than 1 tonne*

Towing: up to 3,500kg*

Ground clearance: 210mm

Wading depth: 600mm

Drive: Full-time 4WD

Power: 140kW | Torque: 325Nm

**Figures vary according to derivative, specification and equipment fitted.*

WHY CONSIDER IT

A practical choice for fleets operating regularly off-road, with strong working credentials and diesel, Commercial and electric options. The D-Max EV adds zero-emission capability while retaining the rugged, operational character expected from the D-Max. ●

Isuzu D-Max EV to Offer Factory-Fitted Solar Option

Isuzu UK has partnered with Genie Insights to offer factory-fitted solar technology as an option on the new Isuzu D-Max EV, providing fleet operators with an integrated solution designed to support battery performance and reduce reliance on the vehicle's electrical system.

The collaboration marks one of the first examples of solar technology being incorporated into a commercial vehicle during production rather than as a post-registration retrofit. By integrating the system before delivery, Isuzu aims to simplify specification for fleet customers while ensuring the technology is fully compatible with the vehicle.

The Isuzu D-Max EV is the first fully electric pick-up available in the UK to combine zero-emission driving with a payload exceeding one tonne. Customers can now specify a 75W solar panel, developed by Genie Insights, which is mounted on the load bed roof and continuously generates electricity from daylight.

Unlike conventional solar panels that rely on direct sunshine, the system uses thin-film CIGS (Copper Indium Gallium Selenide) technology, allowing it to generate power in low-light and overcast conditions commonly experienced in the UK. The electricity produced helps maintain the vehicle's 12V battery and supports onboard electrical systems, reducing battery drain and helping to preserve driving range.

The technology has already been deployed across several large UK fleets. Genie Insights says almost 15,000 systems have been installed on commercial vehicles operated by organisations including Network Rail, British Gas and Openreach, where they have been used to support auxiliary electrical loads and improve vehicle reliability.

For fleet managers, the development highlights growing interest in technologies that maximise the efficiency of electric commercial



Pictured: Alan Able and Max Reeve



The Isuzu D-Max EV fitted with solar technology

vehicles. While electrification remains the primary focus, solutions such as integrated solar panels can help reduce auxiliary battery depletion, particularly for vehicles operating with equipment that continues to draw power while stationary.

Commenting on the partnership, Alan Able, Managing Director of Isuzu UK, said: the collaboration enables customers to specify a proven solar solution directly from the factory, while Genie Insights

Managing Director Matt Reeve described the technology as a "fit-and-forget" system designed to provide operators with greater confidence in day-to-day vehicle reliability.

As manufacturers continue to expand their electric commercial vehicle ranges, factory-integrated technologies that enhance vehicle efficiency and reduce operational downtime are likely to become an increasingly important consideration for fleet operators. ●

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