EFM

ESSENTIAL FLEET MANAGER *Magazine*

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

ISSUE 7
2026



Special Feature:
Vehicle Security

Fleet in Focus:
Fibrus

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Essential Fleet Manager Magazine

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Essential Fleet Manager Magazine is dedicated to 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 supports these responsibilities by delivering practical insights, industry news and expert perspectives on the issues shaping today's fleet sector. Covering compliance, sustainability, technology, vehicle procurement and driver management, our aim is to help fleet professionals make informed decisions and prepare for future challenges.

We are also delighted to introduce **Essential Fleet Professional,** our new publication recognising the people behind the fleet. Through career profiles, shared experiences and professional development insights, it celebrates the individuals, knowledge and expertise that keep essential fleets moving.

We hope you enjoy this issue and take the opportunity to discover our new publication.



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Legal Changes – Are You Compliant?

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

Keeping up with changes in road transport legislation is an important part of running a compliant fleet. Whether you operate HGVs, light goods vehicles or a mixture of vehicles, changes to the rules can have a direct impact on your operation.

In this month's column, I have highlighted some of the recent legislative changes that operators should be aware of, together with the latest DVSA enforcement figures and the practical implications for fleet management.

International LGVs – New Tachograph Requirements

An important change came into force on 1 July 2026, extending drivers' hours and tachograph requirements to certain light goods vehicles operating internationally.

The changes affect goods vehicles and vehicle combinations exceeding 2.5 tonnes maximum permissible mass when used for the international carriage of goods for hire or reward, including relevant journeys between the UK and EU.

Vehicles falling within these requirements must be fitted with a second-generation smart tachograph (Smart 2). Drivers must also comply with the applicable assimilated drivers' hours rules, including recording driving time, breaks, rest periods, other work and periods of availability.

This is a significant change for operators who have previously undertaken international transport without being subject to these requirements.

What Does This Mean for Operators?

Operators should review their vehicle weights, including trailer combinations, the nature of international journeys and whether the correct tachograph equipment is installed.

Drivers must hold the appropriate driver cards and understand their responsibilities for recording activities. Operators must also have arrangements for downloading, analysing and retaining tachograph data, together with procedures for identifying and addressing infringements.

Installing a tachograph is only one part of compliance. The information it produces must also be properly managed.

There are exemptions, including certain own-account international operations where driving is not the driver's main activity. However, operators should establish that the relevant conditions are met before relying on an exemption and if in any doubt take legal advice.

Vehicles not exceeding 3.5 tonnes operating solely within the UK are not brought within the assimilated drivers' hours and tachograph requirements by this particular change.

Further guidance is available on GOV.UK under Drivers' hours and tachographs: goods vehicles.

Zero-Emission Goods Vehicles – Changes for Vehicles up to 4.25 Tonnes

On 1 June 2026, the Goods Vehicles (Testing, Drivers' Hours and Tachographs etc.) (Amendment) Regulations 2026 introduced changes for qualifying zero-emission goods vehicles exceeding 3,500 kg but not exceeding 4,250 kg.

The regulations bring qualifying vehicles within the Class 7 MOT testing regime rather than the heavy goods vehicle annual testing regime. The corresponding tyre tread requirements have also been amended.

They also provide an exemption from the assimilated drivers' hours and associated tachograph requirements for qualifying vehicles, removing the previous 100 km operating restriction under the relevant national derogation.

These changes will be particularly relevant to operators introducing heavier electric vehicles into their fleets.

Exemptions Must Be Properly Understood

An exemption from one requirement does not necessarily remove other regulatory obligations.

Operators should review vehicle classifications, testing arrangements, maintenance schedules and the journeys undertaken to establish which requirements apply.

Particular care is needed where vehicles operate internationally, as the applicable drivers' hours and tachograph rules must be considered separately.

As with any exemption, operators should be able to demonstrate that the qualifying conditions are met. If in doubt seek legal advice.

DVLA – Changes to Online Medical Notifications

On 17 August 2026, DVLA announced an expansion of its online medical notification service for car and motorcycle licence holders.

The changes allow drivers to notify DVLA of a wider range of medical conditions online, with certain applications potentially being processed up to 10 days faster than traditional paper applications.

Although this is a welcome administrative improvement, it does not alter the medical fitness standards that drivers must satisfy. Nor does it mean that the same arrangements extend to every vocational HGV or PSV licence application.

Drivers remain responsible for notifying DVLA of relevant medical conditions, while operators should maintain appropriate procedures for managing driver fitness and checking licence entitlements.

A valid driving licence does not remove

the need to ensure that drivers remain medically fit to operate vehicles safely. Operators should not make assumptions be proactive in engaging your drivers to satisfy yourself.

DVSA Enforcement – Do You Know Your Vehicle Weights?

The latest DVSA enforcement statistics, published in September 2026, provide an indication of the offences being identified during roadside and operator premises inspections.

The figures relate to Great Britain-registered vehicles checked between April and June 2026.

During this period, DVSA conducted 3,178 mechanical checks on HGVs, resulting in 858 prohibitions, a rate of approximately 27%.

There were also 603 HGV weight checks, resulting in 152 overload prohibitions, a rate of 25.2%.

However, the figures relating to light goods vehicles are particularly notable.

DVSA conducted 1,080 LGV weight checks, resulting in 742 overload prohibitions. This represents a prohibition rate of 68.7% among the vehicles checked.

These figures must be considered in context. DVSA enforcement activity is targeted, and the results do not mean that 68.7% of all light goods vehicles operating on our roads are overloaded.

Nevertheless, they highlight the importance of effective vehicle weight management.

Vehicle Weights – More Than Just Gross Vehicle Weight

One common misconception is that a vehicle operating within its maximum gross weight must be compliant.

That is not always the case.

Individual axle weights must also remain within permitted limits. A vehicle can be below its maximum gross weight and still be overloaded on an axle because of how the load is distributed.

Operators must also account for the weight of drivers, passengers, fuel, equipment, racking and additional fittings, all of which reduce the available payload.

This is particularly relevant to fleets carrying tools, materials and varying loads throughout the working day.

Operators should ensure that vehicles are suitable for the work undertaken, drivers understand weight limits and load distribution, and appropriate weighing procedures are in place.

Where necessary, vehicles should be weighed in their normal operating condition rather than relying solely on manufacturers' published payload figures.

The latest enforcement statistics serve as a reminder that overloading remains an important area of DVSA enforcement.

Compliance Requires Regular Review

Legislative changes, new vehicle technologies and changing operational requirements mean that compliance arrangements should be reviewed regularly.

Systems that were appropriate when first introduced may no longer reflect the vehicles being operated or the legislation that applies.

As I regularly remind operators, compliance is not simply about having policies and procedures in place. It is about ensuring they are followed, monitored and remain effective.

Whether the issue concerns tachographs, vehicle testing, driver fitness or overloading, operators should be able to demonstrate that appropriate arrangements are in place.

Key Message – Are You Compliant?

The recent changes highlight the importance of understanding the legal requirements affecting your fleet and ensuring that existing compliance systems remain suitable.

The latest DVSA enforcement figures also demonstrate that established areas of compliance, particularly vehicle weights, continue to result in significant numbers of prohibitions.

Regular reviews, appropriate training and effective oversight can help identify potential shortcomings before they result in enforcement action.

It is far better to address an issue through an internal review than to discover it following a DVSA roadside stop or investigation.

Legislation may change, but the responsibility to maintain a safe and compliant operation remains with the operator.



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

TRANSPORT LAW

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Pictured: Pamela Dennison, Group Head of Fleet & Facilities, Fibrus

Connecting Communities, Managing a **Diverse Fleet**

Introduction

Since 2019, Fibrus has been providing Full Fibre broadband infrastructure and digital connectivity to communities in Northern Ireland and from 2021 in Cumbria. The network is built from the ground up and is fully designed, operated and owned by the Fibrus Group through three specialist divisions: Fibrus Broadband, Hyperfast Networks and Viberoptix.

Consequently, managing the vehicle fleet that builds, extends and supports the network is a complex task, affected by not only the diverse operational requirements of each division, but also the geographical split of operations on either side of the Irish Sea.

Essential Fleet Manager spoke with Pamela Dennison, Group Head of Fleet & Facilities, who explained how the group is meeting these challenges, how the entire car fleet has been transitioned to electric vehicles (EVs) and what the future looks like in further improving fleet efficiency, safety and sustainability.

Interview

Q: Could you first explain the functions of each of the three divisions that make up the group?

The Fibrus Group is made up of three specialist divisions that work together to deliver end-to-end Full Fibre connectivity across Northern Ireland and Cumbria.

Fibrus Broadband is our retail Internet Service Provider (ISP), delivering Full Fibre broadband services to homes and businesses and serving more than 162,000 customers across both regions.

Hyperfast Networks is responsible for operating and maintaining the network, developing our wholesale offering and delivering government-funded connectivity projects.

Viberoptix provides the specialist engineering expertise behind our network deployment, including fibre planning, design and build services.

Together, the three divisions enable us to manage every stage of the connectivity journey, from network design and construction through to operation, maintenance and customer service. As a result, our fleet supports a broad range of activities across different locations and business functions.

Q: What is the fleet breakdown between the three distinct operations?

Across the Group, we currently operate 341 vehicles across Fibrus Broadband, Hyperfast Networks and Viberoptix. The fleet includes a mix of cars, small, medium and large vans, specialist engineering vehicles and HGVs, reflecting the diverse nature of our operations.

Fibrus Broadband operates 48 vehicles, primarily supporting our customer-facing field sales teams. Our car fleet has been fully transitioned to electric vehicles and is made up of a mix of Kia Niros and Volkswagen ID.3s.

Hyperfast Networks, together with wider Group functions, operates 57 vehicles supporting network delivery and maintenance activities. Of these, 22 are plug-in hybrid vans, helping us balance business needs with our sustainability goals.

> Our fleet supports a wide range of activities across the Group, so there is no one-size-fits-all approach to vehicle specification.



Rural operations in Cumbria present particular challenges for fleet management, from narrow roads and remote locations to vehicle suitability and charging infrastructure.

The largest portion of the fleet sits within Viberoptix, which operates 236 vehicles, including specialist engineering, splicing and construction vehicles used to build and expand our Full Fibre network.

The makeup of the fleet reflects the breadth of services delivered across the Group, from customer acquisition and network maintenance through to large-scale infrastructure deployment.

Q: With a great diversity of operational requirements, how do you engage with suppliers to ensure that each vehicle is specified to be fit-for-purpose?

Our fleet supports a wide range of activities across the Group, so there is no one-size-fits-all approach to vehicle specification.

We work closely with teams across all business units to understand how vehicles will be used day to day and the demands they need to meet. Those requirements are then discussed with manufacturers, leasing providers and vehicle suppliers to ensure each vehicle has the right payload, storage capacity, equipment fit-out and capability for its role.

For example, the needs of our customer-facing sales teams in Fibrus Broadband are very different from those of our engineering teams in Viberoptix, whose vehicles often carry specialist fibre and splicing equipment. Geography is also an important consideration. In more rural areas, particularly in Cumbria, manoeuvrability and accessibility can be just as important as payload or range.

We also place significant emphasis on supplier support. With operations across both Northern Ireland and Great Britain, it's essential that servicing, maintenance and aftercare are readily available to minimise downtime and keep our teams moving.

Once vehicles are in service, we regularly review performance, reliability and driver feedback with our suppliers. That insight helps shape future vehicle specifications, ensuring the fleet continues to meet business needs while delivering the best whole-life value.

Q: Over the whole fleet, how do you utilise technology to ensure that operations are as sustainable as possible and that risk is managed and minimised?

Technology plays a central role in how we manage our fleet, helping us improve efficiency, sustainability and safety across the business.

We use telematics systems to give us real-time visibility of vehicle usage, including mileage, idling times and driving behaviours such as speeding, harsh braking and acceleration. This data helps us identify trends, manage risk and support drivers where improvements may be needed.

One of our key areas of focus is reducing unnecessary idling. It's a relatively simple change, but it helps lower fuel consumption, reduce emissions and minimise wear and tear on vehicles. The impact can be significant. In one week alone, our telematics data recorded 604 hours of idling across the fleet, consuming 403 litres of fuel at a cost of £746.

Following the launch of an **engine-off** campaign with drivers, idling fell by 46%, reducing to 326 hours, 218 litres of fuel and £403 per week. If that improvement is sustained across a full year, it equates to a saving of around 14,500 hours of idling, 9,600 litres of fuel and approximately £18,000.

Telematics insights are reviewed alongside other fleet management measures, including driver licence checks, vehicle inspections and compliance reporting, giving us a joined-up view of fleet risk and performance. Technology gives us the visibility and insight to make better decisions, improve safety and run the fleet as efficiently as possible.

Q: Your UK government-funded Project Gigabit Cumbria is dedicated to developing connectivity in the highly rural landscape of Cumbria. What are the specific challenges affecting fleet operations in this environment?

Cumbria presents a very different operating environment to many urban network builds, with teams often travelling significant distances to reach remote communities before work even begins.

That makes vehicle selection particularly important. Many locations are accessed via narrow rural roads, so we need vehicles that offer the right balance of practicality, reliability and manoeuvrability.

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Fibrus Broadband has transitioned its entire 48-vehicle car fleet to electric, with analysis indicating running costs approximately 53% lower per mile than equivalent diesel vehicles.



Driver welfare is also a key consideration. Colleagues are often working in remote areas where mobile coverage can be limited, so robust lone-working procedures are just as important as the vehicles themselves.

Given the scale of the area we cover, maintaining vehicles and minimising downtime requires careful planning, ensuring servicing and support are available wherever our teams are working.

As we continue to explore opportunities for greater electrification, charging infrastructure in some rural areas remains an important factor alongside business needs.

At the heart of it is making sure our teams have reliable vehicles they can depend on to connect communities across Cumbria, wherever they are located.

Q: The car fleet assigned to Fibrus Broadband is now 100% EV. Could you take us through the background and what steps were necessary to achieve this and what challenges did you encounter along the way?

Moving to a 100% electric car fleet within Fibrus Broadband has been a significant milestone for us and one we're incredibly proud of.

We were an early adopter of EVs and today all 48 vehicles within our ISP fleet are fully electric, supporting colleagues across Northern Ireland and Cumbria. From the outset, our focus was on making the transition as easy as possible for drivers while ensuring the vehicles could meet business needs.

A key part of that was charging. Rather than installing home chargers, we opted to work with charging partners including Weev in Northern Ireland and Allstar in Cumbria, giving drivers the flexibility to charge when and where they needed to during the working day.

As with any major change, there was a period of adjustment. Early conversations were often centred around range confidence, particularly for colleagues travelling longer distances in rural areas. We addressed that by selecting vehicles with suitable range capabilities and helping drivers understand how EVs could fit into their daily routines.

The response has been overwhelmingly positive. Drivers have embraced the technology and we've seen the benefits through lower running costs, reduced emissions and a more sustainable fleet overall. Our analysis found that EVs cost around 53% less to run per mile than equivalent diesel vehicles. In May 2025 alone, our EV fleet covered more than 79,000 miles, delivering a net saving of around £5,000 for the month. That's approximately £70,000 in annual savings while supporting close to one million electric miles each year.

Just as importantly, the experience has given us a much clearer understanding of what successful fleet electrification looks like in practice. That learning is helping to inform how we approach future opportunities across the wider fleet.

Q: What are the current challenges that complicate the extension of the fleet electrification programme to the LCV-based fleet?

Moving our van fleet to electric isn't quite as straightforward as it was with our company cars.

The opportunity is significant. Across the wider ICE fleet, we currently consume around 11,000 litres of diesel every week, highlighting the potential environmental and commercial benefits that further electrification could deliver.

However, our engineers cover large areas, often in rural locations, and their vehicles need to carry specialist tools and equipment, so range, charging availability and payload all have a significant impact on what works in practice. The choice of electric vans that can accommodate racking, ladders and equipment while still offering sufficient range is currently more limited.

We also need to think about resilience. When we're responding to storms or carrying out network restoration work, vehicles need to be ready to go at short notice and remain operational for long periods.

That's why we're currently using a number of plug-in hybrid vans within Hyperfast Networks, which provides a good balance between reducing emissions and meeting operational needs.

We're continually monitoring developments in vehicle technology and charging infrastructure, and we'll look to introduce more electric vans as the market evolves and the business case becomes stronger.

Q: Fibrus operates across Northern Ireland and Cumbria, navigating differing regulatory and operational requirements, in part due to Northern Ireland's unique post-Brexit position. What are the key fleet compliance and operational challenges across these regions and how does Fibrus manage them in practice?

Operating a fleet across Northern Ireland and Great Britain definitely adds complexity, but it's something we've built into the way we manage the fleet from day one.

> Infrastructure, technology and policy all need to move forward together if businesses are going to accelerate the transition to lower-emission vehicles.

One of the biggest considerations is making sure we have the right support network around us. We rely on manufacturers, leasing partners and service providers that can support our vehicles wherever they're operating, whether that's in Belfast, Carlisle or some of the more remote communities we serve.

We also need to stay on top of the regulatory landscape. Northern Ireland's unique position means there can be differences in legislation and compliance requirements, so it's important that we're continually monitoring developments and planning ahead.

There are practical challenges too. Moving vehicles between Northern Ireland and Great Britain requires careful coordination, particularly as the fleet evolves and we introduce more electric vehicles into our operations.

The key for us is having consistent processes across the business. We operate a single fleet compliance framework, with the flexibility to account for regional requirements where needed. Combined with strong supplier relationships and regular compliance reviews, that helps us stay compliant, minimise disruption and keep our teams focused on delivering for customers.

Q: What are your objectives in further improving fleet operations across your three divisions?

Our focus is always on finding ways to improve how the fleet operates, while ensuring our teams have the tools they need to do their jobs effectively.

We're making greater use of telematics and fleet data to help us better understand how vehicles are being used and where we can improve performance. Driver safety will continue to be a key priority, supported through training, monitoring and a proactive approach to risk management.

We're also looking at ways to create greater consistency across the Group through more standardised systems and reporting, giving us better visibility of fleet performance across all three divisions.

As technology continues to evolve, we'll keep exploring opportunities to reduce our environmental impact and build on the progress we've already made with fleet electrification.

It's about having the right vehicles in the right places at the right time. Our three divisions all have different requirements, so we want a fleet that's flexible enough to support future growth while continuing to deliver value, reliability and the best possible service to the business.

Q: How far do these improvements need to be supported by changes in legislation and the expansion of EV infrastructure?

Infrastructure, technology and policy all need to move forward together if businesses are going to accelerate the transition to lower-emission vehicles.

We've already seen the benefits of electrifying our car fleet, but commercial vehicles are a different challenge, particularly in rural areas where charging infrastructure can be more limited and operational demands are greater.

Continued investment in charging networks, alongside improvements in vehicle technology, will make it easier for businesses like ours to introduce more electric vehicles where they make practical sense.

From a legislative perspective, clarity and consistency are important because fleet decisions are long-term investments. For businesses like Fibrus, which operate across both Northern Ireland and Great Britain, greater alignment between policy, incentives and infrastructure investment would make it easier to plan and manage that transition on a consistent basis.

We're committed to reducing our environmental impact, and as infrastructure, technology and policy continue to evolve, we'll be well placed to build on the progress we've already made.●

fibrus.com



Keeping specialist engineering vehicles operational is a priority for Fibrus, with vehicle reliability, maintenance and downtime management central to supporting network delivery.



Openreach Partners with **Geotab** to Improve **Fleet Safety** and **Efficiency**

Pictured: Aaron Jarvis, Vice President EMEA at Geotab and Judy O'Keefe, Director of Fleet Management at Openreach

Openreach Fleet has partnered with telematics provider Geotab to improve driver safety, reduce vehicle downtime and support its fleet decarbonisation ambitions.

Operating more than 23,000 company cars and commercial vans, Openreach has one of the UK's largest commercial fleets, with engineers travelling millions of miles each year to build and maintain the country's digital network.

An initial trial is underway, with volunteer engineers testing the technology and assessing how connected vehicle data can improve fleet performance and driver safety.

Geotab's platform will provide insights into vehicle condition, helping identify potential maintenance issues before they result in breakdowns. It will also support analysis of fuel consumption, vehicle utilisation and opportunities to reduce emissions.

Drivers will receive feedback through an app, allowing them to review their driving behaviour and identify areas for improvement. Privacy controls will limit data collection outside working hours.

Judy O'Keefe, Director of Fleet Management at Openreach, said: "We have worked with the CWU and Prospect, our recognised Trade Unions on this trial which will help us better understand how our fleet is performing so we can improve safety, reduce downtime and provide our colleagues with the best possible support.

"By giving us earlier visibility of potential vehicle issues and better insight into how our fleet operates, this technology can help create a safer, more efficient and more sustainable fleet for the future."

Aaron Jarvis, Vice President EMEA at Geotab, said: *"Openreach operates a nationwide fleet in all conditions, delivering the critical connectivity that powers the UK. We have collaborated closely to ensure our solution was rigorously validated by both leadership and the engineers who depend on driving for their daily roles.*

"Throughout this journey, Openreach's unwavering commitment to workforce safety and trust has been second to none. This has been evidenced by their deliberate approach to technology selection and the proactive engagement with their drivers which will continue via this trial. Establishing this foundation of trust is just as vital as the insights generated by the data, and we are proud to be a part of their ambitions."

Subject to a successful trial, the technology is expected to be rolled out across the entire Openreach fleet.●



Winter Driving - Preparing Commercial Fleets for Snow and Ice



Snow, ice and freezing temperatures can create significant challenges for commercial vehicle fleets, particularly where drivers are expected to maintain services throughout the winter. From vehicle preparation and journey planning to temporary traction aids, a practical approach to winter driving can help reduce risk and minimise disruption.

For fleet operators, winter weather presents a familiar challenge. While heavy snowfall may be relatively infrequent across much of the UK, even a short period of freezing conditions can cause widespread disruption, particularly on untreated roads, rural routes and residential streets.

Commercial vans face additional challenges. Vehicles may be carrying tools, equipment and materials, operating at different weights throughout the day and travelling to locations that are not always accessible by main roads.

For maintenance teams, engineers and field service employees, the final part of a journey can often be the most difficult. A vehicle may travel without difficulty along a treated main road, only to encounter compacted snow or ice when entering a housing estate, industrial site or remote property.

Preparing drivers and vehicles for these conditions is therefore an important part of winter fleet management.

Vehicle Preparation Starts Before the Snow

Tyres are among the most important considerations when preparing vehicles for winter.

Adequate tread depth, correct inflation pressures and the general condition of tyres all influence vehicle handling and braking performance.

Although the legal minimum tread depth for most light commercial vehicle tyres is 1.6mm across the central three-quarters of the tread, fleet operators may choose more conservative replacement thresholds to maintain suitable performance.

Winter and all-season tyres can offer advantages in colder conditions, depending on their specification, but fleet managers should consider the operating environment, annual mileage and typical weather conditions before making changes to tyre policy.

Routine winter checks should also cover batteries, screenwash, wipers, lights, heating and demisting systems.

Vehicles should carry appropriate emergency equipment, including warm clothing, a torch, a charged mobile phone and any additional items identified through the organisation's winter risk assessment.

For drivers working remotely, reliable communication is particularly important if a vehicle becomes stranded.

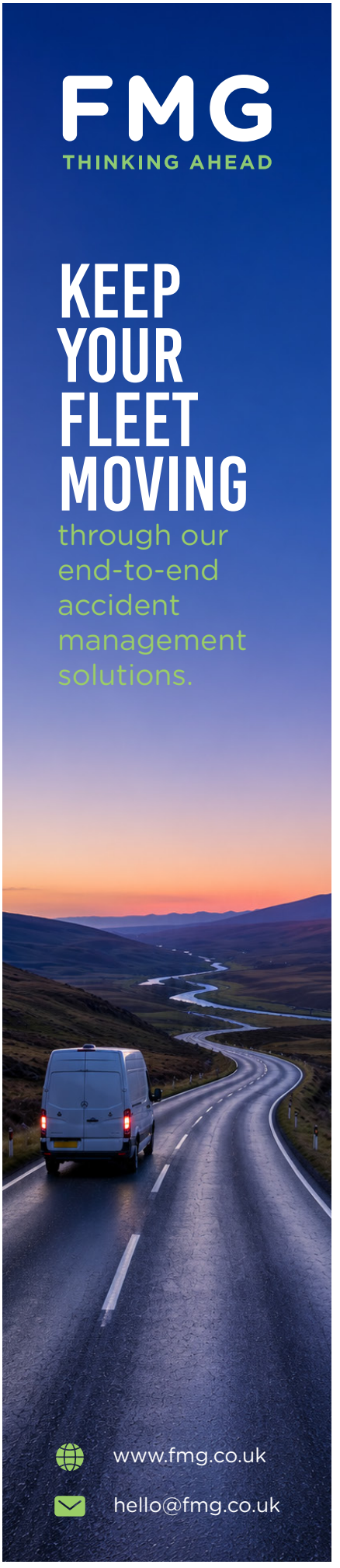
Understanding the Limitations of Traction

One of the difficulties with driving in snow is that a vehicle can lose traction even when the road appears reasonably passable.

This is particularly noticeable on inclines, at junctions and when pulling away from a stationary position.

A loaded commercial van may behave differently from an unladen vehicle, while variations in weight distribution and drivetrain configuration can affect how easily traction is maintained.

Drivers should be aware that electronic stability and traction control systems can assist with vehicle control but cannot overcome the limitations of available grip.



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Where roads become covered in snow or ice, additional traction equipment may be worth considering.

Snow Socks – A Practical Option for Commercial Vehicles

Snow socks are removable textile traction devices fitted over a vehicle's driven wheels to improve grip on snow-covered or icy surfaces.

Unlike traditional metal snow chains, they are generally lightweight, compact and relatively straightforward to store in a vehicle.

For commercial fleets, this can make them a practical option where snow is an occasional rather than everyday operating condition.

They may be particularly useful for vehicles that encounter short sections of untreated roads, steep residential streets or access routes where traction becomes difficult.

Because they can be carried in the vehicle until needed, snow socks offer a temporary solution without requiring permanent changes to tyres or vehicle specification.

However, they are not a substitute for winter tyres or careful driving, and their suitability depends on the vehicle, tyre dimensions, axle configuration and operating conditions.

Drivers must follow the manufacturer's fitting instructions, speed restrictions and guidance on suitable surfaces. Snow socks are intended for use in appropriate snowy or icy conditions and can wear rapidly if driven on clear roads.

Fleet managers should also check that the chosen product is compatible with the vehicle's tyres, available wheel clearance and manufacturer requirements.

Importantly, drivers should practise fitting traction aids before they are needed. Attempting to install unfamiliar equipment at the roadside in freezing temperatures is far from ideal.

Driving to the Conditions

Even with appropriate tyres and additional traction equipment, winter driving requires a different approach.

Drivers should reduce speed, increase following distances and avoid sudden steering, braking or acceleration.

Stopping distances can increase considerably on snow and ice, making anticipation particularly important.

Extra care is needed on bridges, shaded roads and untreated surfaces, where ice may remain even when surrounding roads appear clear.

For vehicles carrying tools and equipment, secure loading is also essential. Sudden movements caused by a loss of traction can place additional forces on unsecured items within the load compartment.

Where conditions deteriorate, drivers should avoid unnecessary journeys and seek advice rather than attempting to continue along routes that may no longer be safe.

Planning for Winter Disruption

Fleet managers should consider how winter conditions could affect routes, vehicle availability and scheduled work.

Weather forecasts and road condition information can help identify locations where journeys may need to be delayed or alternative routes considered.

For organisations covering large geographical areas, conditions can vary significantly between depots and operating regions.

It may be appropriate to prioritise urgent work, reschedule non-essential appointments or allocate suitably equipped vehicles to locations where snow and ice are more likely.

Drivers should also understand the procedures for reporting difficult road conditions, requesting assistance or abandoning a journey when it is unsafe to continue.

Clear guidance is particularly important for employees working alone or travelling to remote locations.

Preparation Rather Than Reaction

Winter weather cannot always be predicted with certainty, but many of the risks associated with snow and ice can be reduced through preparation.

Maintaining vehicles in suitable condition, checking tyre performance, providing appropriate equipment and ensuring drivers understand how to respond to deteriorating road conditions can all contribute to safer operations.

Temporary traction aids such as snow socks may provide an additional option for fleets that occasionally encounter snow-covered roads, particularly where fitting conventional chains would be impractical.

However, no equipment can guarantee safe progress in severe weather.

For fleet managers, the priority is to ensure that vehicles and drivers are prepared, that suitable options are available when traction becomes difficult and, above all, that operational pressures never take precedence over safety.●



Winter Checklist

- Check tyre tread, pressures and condition.
- Inspect batteries, lights, wipers and screenwash.
- Check heating and demisting systems.
- Provide emergency kits and warm clothing.
- Check traction aids are compatible with vehicles and tyres.
- Ensure drivers know how to use equipment safely.
- Communicate winter driving guidance.
- Check load security and weight distribution.
- Confirm communication and emergency procedures.
- Monitor weather forecasts and road conditions.
- Review routes to remote and untreated locations.
- Prioritise essential journeys and postpone unsafe travel.

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KEEPS YOU MOVING!



Why **Winter Downtime** is a **Hidden Cost** for **Commercial Fleets** — and Why Simple, **Physical Traction Aids** Are Now **Essential**

Downtime is one of the most disruptive and expensive issues commercial fleet operators face — whether you manage a dozen vans, a national fleet of HGVs, or are transitioning to electric vehicles (EVs). Every minute a vehicle is off the road costs time, money, and productivity — especially when it happens unexpectedly.

While fleet technology has helped optimise scheduling, routing, and diagnostics, winter brings a unique set of challenges that no amount of software can overcome. When snow, slush or black ice leaves a vehicle stranded, it doesn't matter how clever your telematics are — without traction, the wheels aren't turning.

And as more commercial operators shift towards EV adoption, the impact of cold weather becomes even more serious — making physical, onboard winter solutions not just useful, but essential.

Winter Downtime Hits Commercial Fleets Hard

For commercial fleets — whether operating LCVs, HGVs or specialist service vehicles — the consequences of winter weather are particularly costly:

- Missed deliveries or service appointments leading to breached SLAs.
- Drivers delayed or stranded in unsafe conditions. Disruption to carefully planned logistics schedules
- Vehicles out of position for the next day's workload.
- Extra recovery costs or need for additional support vehicles.
- Knock-on impact across other jobs, routes, or drivers.

Unlike leisure drivers or private motorists, commercial vehicle operators can't afford to "wait it out." Fleets must keep moving — regardless of weather — while protecting driver safety, vehicle integrity, and operational timelines.

But when tyres lose grip, especially in rural or untreated areas, there's often no quick fix. Even short delays caused by snow or ice can cause a ripple effect across multiple jobs or contracts.

EVs Add a New Layer of Risk

The growing use of electric vans and trucks across delivery, service, and municipal fleets brings clear sustainability and cost advantages — but in winter, EVs are particularly vulnerable:

- Cold weather can reduce battery performance by 30–40%.
- Heated cabins and battery warming systems drain energy faster.
- A stuck vehicle spinning wheels burns valuable charge with zero movement.
- If a battery depletes, recovery becomes more complex and time-consuming.
- Additional downtime is often needed to recharge the vehicle before it's usable again.

For electric fleets, winter isn't just inconvenient — it can completely jeopardise daily operations. That's why preparation must go beyond route planning and include practical, vehicle-based solutions that can help drivers deal with traction issues in the moment.

The Missing Piece: A Practical, Physical Winter Traction Aid

Enter AutoSock's textile-based winter traction aid — a highly practical, low-cost solution designed to give immediate grip on snow or ice.

Simple, compact, and effective, the product fits over the vehicle's driving wheels (front or rear) in three easy steps. If a driver can pull on a sock, they can fit this! There's no need for tools, special training, or mechanical knowledge — just basic common sense and a few minutes of effort.



"Fleet operators invest heavily in planning and technology, but when winter hits, the ability to keep moving often comes down to traction. Our textile traction aid is a simple, proven product that delivers real results when it matters most. For EVs especially, preventing an immobilisation event can save hours — and thousands — in lost time and productivity."

Once fitted, the product provides instant traction by gripping the snow or ice and removing the thin layer of water between the tyre and the road surface, which is often responsible for a loss of grip in wet slush or freezing conditions. The result? Restored dry friction, safe movement, and control — enough to get the vehicle to treated roads or back to base. And once clear? The traction aid is just as easy to remove and pack away for next time.

Designed for Commercial Use – Across All Vehicle Types

AutoSock understands the unique demands of commercial fleets. That's why its traction aids are available in sizes for virtually all vehicle types, including:

- Passenger cars.
- Vans and light commercial vehicles (LCVs).
- Electric vans and trucks.
- Heavy goods vehicles (HGVs).
- Fleet vehicles with twin or wide tyres.

With retail pricing starting from just £49.95, it's an affordable way to equip every vehicle in your fleet with essential winter protection — without the cost, weight, or complexity of snow chains.

A Smarter Standard for Winter

Preparedness Fleet operators can no longer afford to treat physical winter prep as an afterthought. The combination of:

- Rising EV adoption.
- Unpredictable winter weather.
- Pressure to reduce downtime.

. . . .means that simple, reliable traction solutions must become part of standard winter fleet equipment. AutoSock's product is already in use across commercial and municipal fleets worldwide, helping drivers stay mobile, safe, and on time — even in unpredictable winter conditions.

Conclusion: Prepare Beyond the Dashboard

The fleet sector has embraced digital transformation. But no route planner, battery monitor, or fleet dashboard can move a stuck van or HGV. When the tyres can't grip, the job stops.

That's why fleet readiness in winter must be both digital and physical. A textile-based traction aid from AutoSock offers a low-cost, no-fuss way to equip your vehicles for real-world road conditions — from icy city streets to snow-covered rural roads. Whether you're operating diesel HGVs or all-electric delivery vans, this winter, don't just plan for disruption — prevent it. Equip your drivers with the means to keep moving.●



For more information visit: **www.autosock.co.uk**

AutoSock KEEPS YOU MOVING!

End-to-End, Without Exception

Taking Ownership of the Entire Vehicle Conversion Process





Lisa Osborne,
UK Head of Service & Delivery (Vehicle Conversions) at bott Ltd.

Behind every completed vehicle conversion lies a complex process of planning, coordination and problem-solving. As fleet requirements become increasingly demanding, getting vehicles fleet-ready depends on much more than the quality of the installation itself.

In the third article of The bott Fleet Insight Series, Essential Fleet Manager speaks with Lisa Osborne, UK Head of Service & Delivery (Vehicle Conversions) at bott, about managing the entire conversion process, the importance of accountability and why customer support should continue long after a vehicle has been delivered.

A new van might arrive at a converter as little more than a standard production vehicle. By the time it reaches the customer, it could have passed through several specialist installations, acquiring electrical systems, security equipment, tracking technology, storage solutions and vehicle graphics, all designed to prepare it for a specific operational role.

For the fleet operator, however, the expectation is relatively straightforward. The vehicle needs to arrive on time, fully equipped and ready to work.

Making that happen is not always straightforward.

Behind the scenes, manufacturers, dealers, specialist suppliers, installers and delivery teams must work to a coordinated schedule. Specifications can change, vehicles may arrive late or with missing equipment, and delivery arrangements must often fit around existing operational commitments.

For organisations providing essential services, any disruption can have consequences that extend well beyond the fleet department.

At bott, these activities are coordinated by a 16-strong Service and Delivery team led by Lisa. Its role extends beyond overseeing conversions to managing the customer experience throughout the programme and providing support once vehicles enter service.

"The important thing for customers is that they don't have to manage all these different elements themselves. From the start, we recognise the importance of taking responsibility for the many complexities involved in the process and solving any issues, all the while keeping the customer informed."

Putting Accountability at the Heart of Delivery

The Service and Delivery team operates across three closely connected functions. Customer Support Managers provide dedicated operational support, acting as a central point of coordination between customers and the business while managing communications, progress reviews and day-to-day enquiries.

The Delivery Team coordinates vehicle logistics, build schedules, manufacturers, dealers, third-party installations, handover and delivery requirements. Meanwhile, the Aftersales team, comprising Technical Coordinators, provides nationwide support once vehicles are operational.

Together, these functions provide continuity throughout what can often be a complex and lengthy conversion programme, with individuals working collaboratively to understand and respond to customer requirements.

In 2023, bott restructured its operations to bring greater ownership and decision-making closer to customers. Further changes followed in 2026, when the Delivery Team moved away from a structure in which individual logistical activities were managed by different members of the team, towards greater responsibility for customer accounts and the wider delivery programme.

"Previously, individual logistical activities were managed by different members of the team. The new approach means our team members develop a much greater

bott's customer-focused approach brings together dedicated support, delivery coordination and aftersales expertise, ensuring clear communication, accountability and continuity throughout every stage of the vehicle conversion programme.



understanding of each customer, their fleet, operational priorities and the challenges they face.

"It creates greater personal accountability, shifting the focus from completing individual tasks to understanding the overall programme and ensuring the customer receives the outcome they need."

The importance of working together is also reflected in bott's employee feedback, with 93% of employees agreeing that their teams work well together. A further 90% report receiving the right level of support and coaching from their line manager, reinforcing the importance of developing people alongside processes.

For customers, the benefit is a more joined-up approach, with team members who understand the wider programme rather than simply the individual activities involved.

When One Vehicle Involves Multiple Suppliers

Vehicle conversions frequently involve several specialist suppliers, each responsible for different elements of the finished vehicle. Bringing these activities together requires careful scheduling, particularly when one installation must be completed before another can begin.

"Something as straightforward as the order in which equipment is installed can have a significant impact on the success of a programme. Our role is to bring all these moving parts together, coordinating with vehicle manufacturers, dealers, specialist suppliers and installers to ensure every vehicle is delivered on time, to specification, and ready to meet the customer's operational needs."

A good example is bott's work with Currys, involving 214 vehicle installations and approximately 20 specification revisions. The programme covered everything from receiving unregistered vehicles and carrying out pre-delivery inspections to installing trackers, solar panels, racking and livery.

"Managing these elements as one programme reduces the administrative burden on the customer and helps identify potential issues before they affect delivery."

With multiple suppliers contributing to the finished vehicle, maintaining oversight of the programme helps prevent conflicting schedules and ensures that changes to one element can be considered alongside the wider delivery requirements.

Keeping Essential Services Moving

For fleet operators, vehicle replacement programmes must often be planned around existing operational commitments, with outgoing vehicles remaining in service until their replacements are ready. This is particularly important for organisations delivering essential services.

"One of the most important aspects of any conversion programme is understanding when vehicles are needed and how the transition will impact day-to-day fleet operations.

"Successful delivery is about far more than completing the vehicle conversion itself. Careful planning is needed to minimise operational disruption, taking into account vehicle availability, installation schedules, delivery locations, handover arrangements and, where required, the collection and decommissioning of outgoing vehicles. Our role is to ensure the entire process runs smoothly from start to finish."

bott's work with Charnwood Borough Council demonstrates how these challenges can be managed. The company coordinated the conversion and delivery of 46 vans over several weeks, scheduling deliveries around the Council's operational commitments. This involved managing vehicles arriving from port, third-party installations, the removal of telematics equipment and collection of the outgoing fleet.

"Whether we're dealing with 50 vehicles or 500, the objective is the same: understand the customer's operational priorities, plan the transition carefully and minimise disruption."

When Things Go Wrong, Who Takes Responsibility?

Even carefully planned conversion programmes can encounter unexpected problems, from missing factory options and component shortages to installation delays. When several suppliers are involved, resolving these issues can become an additional burden for the fleet operator.

"Problems can arise at any stage of a conversion programme, and sometimes they involve factors outside our direct control. What matters is how quickly we identify the issue and how everyone involved works together to resolve it.

"Our approach is to take responsibility for coordinating a solution rather than simply passing the problem back to another supplier."

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The bott Toolkit gives drivers instant access to conversion documentation, safety information, support contacts and fault reporting, all from their smartphone.

This approach was tested during a programme for Komatsu, a global manufacturer of construction and mining equipment, whose UK field engineers depend on their vehicles to support customers.

When vehicles arrived without critical manufacturer-installed options, bott worked with the relevant parties to resolve the issue and prevent disruption to the delivery schedule. The vehicles were delivered on time, fully functional, safe and compliant.

"For a business such as Komatsu, having engineers without suitable vehicles can have consequences far beyond the fleet department. It can affect their ability to support customers and maintain operational commitments."

For the fleet operator, the priority is not establishing which supplier caused the problem, but getting it resolved quickly.

"That is why taking ownership of a problem is so important. The customer needs a solution, not a discussion about who is responsible."

Better Information, Fewer Phone Calls

Keeping track of vehicles throughout a conversion programme is essential, particularly when deliveries are spread across multiple locations and dates. Fleet operators need reliable information to plan for new arrivals and ensure vehicles enter service with minimal disruption.

bott has introduced digital processes to improve visibility of vehicle conversion progress and reduce administration. Vehicle appraisals are now fully digitised across its sites, while configurable automatic milestone notifications keep customers informed of progress at key stages.

"Customers need accurate information so they can plan ahead, rather than having to chase updates or react to unexpected changes.

"Our aim is to make that information readily available, giving customers greater confidence in the delivery process."

Technology also supports drivers once vehicles enter service. The bott Toolkit provides QR code access to features such as daily checks, contact details, vehicle documentation, instructional videos and information relating to ancillary equipment.

More than 11,000 Toolkits have been supplied free of charge.

"For us, technology is about making information easier to access and reducing unnecessary administration, both during the conversion programme and once vehicles are in service."

A Relationship That Continues Beyond Handover

Completing the conversion and delivering the vehicle may mark the end of the programme, but not the relationship.

Once vehicles enter service, fleet operators still need access to technical advice, equipment support and assistance when problems arise.

bott's Aftersales team provides nationwide support through its Technical Coordinators, managing reported issues through to resolution and using the information gathered to identify opportunities for improvement.

"We stay engaged between replacement cycles, ensuring customers always have somewhere to turn for technical guidance, equipment support, or assistance with any issues impacting their vehicle."

This continuity is particularly important for organisations operating long vehicle replacement cycles, where a conversion partner may remain involved with a fleet for many years.

bott reports an average customer relationship of 10 years, while one customer has worked with the company for 28 years.

The quality of its ongoing support is also reflected in customer feedback, with engineer visits achieving a satisfaction score of 9.86 out of 10.

"Those relationships are built on consistency and trust. Customers need confidence that the support they receive after delivery is every bit as important to us as the original conversion programme."

Measuring What Matters to Customers

Customer feedback is an important part of monitoring performance, but at bott it is also used to inform operational decisions, shape processes and identify where improvements can be made.



The bott Aftersales team provides ongoing technical support long after vehicles have been delivered, helping customers resolve issues, maintain operational efficiency and build lasting relationships.

Across its UK operations, the company reports a Customer Satisfaction Score (CSAT) of 9.32 out of 10, an improvement from 8.1, alongside a Net Promoter Score (NPS) of +90.3, indicating a particularly high level of customer advocacy.

The company also reports a right-first-time score of 91%, providing another measure of the effectiveness of its delivery and service processes.

"An NPS of +90.3 is something we're incredibly proud of, but for us, success is not just measured by the score. It's about how we use customer feedback to uphold our standards, refine our processes, and continually raise the bar."

For Lisa, the value of these measures lies in understanding what customers experience throughout the conversion process and using that information to influence how the business operates.

This emphasis on service is also reflected internally. In bott's employee feedback, 91% of employees say they feel they provide a great service to customers, while 90% would recommend bott as a great place to work.

The relationship between employee engagement and customer experience is particularly relevant to a business where complex delivery programmes depend on communication, collaboration and the willingness of individuals to take responsibility.

Delivering More Than a Finished Vehicle

Expectations of vehicle conversion partners are changing as fleet operators look for greater accountability, better communication and support that extends beyond the initial installation.

For Lisa, the difference lies in understanding what customers need from the entire process, rather than focusing solely on the completed vehicle.

"Expectations of a conversion partner have changed. Customers need more than a company that can manufacture and install equipment. Customers also need a partner who understands their operation, coordinates all elements of the programme, communicates effectively and takes responsibility when challenges arise.

"Throughout this series of insights, we've talked about understanding the job the vehicle needs to do and delivering quality consistently. Taking ownership of the entire programme brings those principles together.

"Ultimately, success isn't simply handing over a converted vehicle. It's delivering something that works for the customer, supports their operation and continues to perform throughout its working life."

Looking Ahead – Delivering Quality at Scale

In the next issue of Essential Fleet Manager, the final Supplier Insight in this four-part series, Delivering Quality at Scale, will explore what operational excellence means in practice and how bott combines engineering expertise, proven manufacturing processes and continuous improvement to maintain consistent standards across its conversion programmes.

The article will also examine the company's investment in people, production systems and quality control, alongside the importance of transparency, performance measurement and traceability in building customer confidence.●

Talk to bott about your next vehicle conversion programme.
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bott

Protecting the Working Van

Choosing the Right Security Measures to Protect Vehicles, Tools and Equipment Without Compromising Operations

Additional locks, reinforced doors, secure tool storage and protection for externally mounted equipment can all help reduce the vulnerability of commercial vans. However, selecting the right security measures requires careful consideration of vehicle design, operational requirements and the potential cost of theft-related downtime.

For essential service fleets, the financial consequences of van theft or attempted break-ins can extend considerably beyond the value of stolen equipment. Damage to doors, locking mechanisms and body panels can result in costly repairs and extended vehicle-off-road (VOR) periods, while replacing specialist tools and equipment may cause further operational disruption.

Although manufacturers continue to develop vehicle security systems, standard protection is not necessarily designed around the demands of a fully equipped service or maintenance van. Vehicles carrying expensive tools, diagnostic equipment and specialist components present a different risk profile from those used primarily for transporting goods or personnel.

The challenge for fleet operators is determining which additional measures offer worthwhile protection, how they interact with the vehicle's construction and whether they remain practical throughout its working life.

Are Manufacturer Security Systems Sufficient?

Vans are equipped with increasingly sophisticated electronic locking, immobilisation and alarm systems. However, these do not always prevent forced entry, particularly when criminals target the load compartment rather than the vehicle's electronic security.

Side and rear doors can be vulnerable to physical attacks involving locking mechanisms, handles, door edges or body panels. The level of protection varies between manufacturers and models, making it difficult to adopt a single security specification across a mixed fleet.

Door peeling, where force is applied to deform part of a door and gain access to the load compartment, illustrates the limitations of relying solely on central locking. Even where thieves fail to gain entry, the resulting damage can be extensive.

Model-specific reinforcement products, protective plates, anti-drill guards and additional locking systems can improve resistance to certain forms of attack. However, their effectiveness depends on the particular vulnerability being addressed and the quality of installation.

For operators specifying new vehicles, security requirements should be considered alongside payload, load access and conversion suitability rather than addressed only after vehicles have entered service.

Selecting The Right Additional Locks

Slam locks, deadlocks and hook locks are widely used across commercial fleets, but each has different operational implications.

Slam locks automatically secure a door when it closes, making them particularly suited to vehicles where operatives make frequent stops or repeatedly access the load compartment. Their main advantage is reducing reliance on the driver remembering to lock the vehicle.

However, automatic locking also introduces the possibility of accidental lockouts, particularly where keys are placed inside the load area during loading or unloading. Key management and emergency access arrangements therefore need consideration.

Deadlocks provide an additional mechanical locking point, independent of the manufacturer's central locking system. They can offer

















The true cost of a van break-in goes far beyond stolen tools. Vehicle damage, downtime and disrupted services can have a much greater impact on fleet operations.

greater protection when vehicles are parked for extended periods, although they require a separate action by the driver.

Hook locks provide another form of mechanical protection, using a hooked bolt that engages with a reinforced keep. Depending on the vehicle and installation, they can offer additional resistance to certain methods of forcing side and rear doors.

The distinction is important for fleets operating different types of vehicles. A utilities maintenance van parked at a remote site for several hours may benefit from a different arrangement from a housing repairs vehicle whose operative accesses tools repeatedly throughout the day.

The decision should also consider whether security needs to be applied to every door or concentrated on particular access points. Fitting multiple additional locks increases installation costs and can complicate access without necessarily delivering a proportionate improvement in protection.

Securing Tools And Equipment Within The Vehicle

For many service and maintenance fleets, the value of the equipment carried can be substantial.

Specialist diagnostic equipment, power tools and testing instruments may be difficult to replace quickly, particularly where items are calibrated, configured for specific applications or required for emergency work.

Lockable storage boxes, reinforced tool cabinets and secure compartments provide an additional level of protection should thieves gain access to the load area. The objective is to make individual items more difficult to access and remove, even where the vehicle's external security has been compromised.

The choice of storage is important. Heavy-duty steel boxes with reinforced locking mechanisms may offer greater resistance to forced entry than standard storage compartments, while lockable drawers and cabinets can provide more practical access for operatives using equipment throughout the day.



Lockable ladder clamps and secure pipe carriers can help protect externally mounted equipment without compromising day-to-day access.

Where high-value tools are carried, consideration should also be given to how the storage unit itself is secured. A lockable box provides limited protection if it can be removed from the vehicle with its contents intact.

For fleet operators, there is a balance between security and functionality. Additional storage equipment increases vehicle weight and can reduce available payload, while poorly positioned cabinets may restrict access to other equipment or interfere with load restraint arrangements.

Integrating secure storage into the original vehicle conversion allows appropriate fixing points, weight distribution and access requirements to be considered alongside racking and other installations.

For existing vehicles, retrofitting lockable storage may provide a relatively straightforward security improvement, although the suitability of mounting arrangements and the additional weight should be assessed.

Protecting Ladders, Pipe Carriers And External Equipment

Security considerations should not be limited to equipment stored inside the vehicle. Many essential service vans carry ladders, access equipment, pipes and other materials externally, often mounted on roof racks or specialist carrying systems.

These items can represent a substantial investment and, because they are readily visible, may be particularly attractive to opportunist thieves.

Ladders are a common example. Roof-mounted ladders may be secured using conventional clamps or retaining systems designed primarily to prevent movement during transport. However, not all provide effective protection against theft.

Lockable ladder clamps and dedicated anti-theft retaining systems can offer additional security while allowing operatives to remove and replace equipment without excessive difficulty.

Lockable pipe carriers provide another practical security measure, particularly for plumbing, utilities and maintenance fleets transporting copper pipe, conduit and other valuable materials.

Any specification should reflect the materials being transported, including their length, weight and frequency of access.

For fleets operating specialist vehicles, roof-mounted security should ideally be considered during the conversion process, although aftermarket solutions are also available for existing vehicles.

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Locks and retaining mechanisms should be included in routine maintenance inspections to ensure they remain secure, functional and easy for operatives to use.

Tool Marking And Forensic Identification

While physical security measures aim to prevent equipment being stolen, property marking provides another level of protection by making stolen items easier to identify and potentially more difficult to sell.

Traditional methods, including engraving, stamping and permanent identification labels, remain useful for power tools, diagnostic equipment and other valuable assets. Visible markings can help establish ownership, particularly where manufacturers' serial numbers have been removed or damaged.

More sophisticated forensic marking systems use specially formulated liquids containing unique chemical identifiers, synthetic DNA codes or microscopic particles. Applied to tools and equipment, these markings are generally invisible under normal lighting but can be detected using ultraviolet light or specialist examination equipment, depending on the system.

The identifiers can be linked to registered ownership records, allowing police to identify recovered equipment and potentially connect stolen property with a particular organisation.

For larger fleets, forensic marking can be incorporated into existing asset management procedures, with equipment marked and registered before being allocated to individual vehicles or operatives.

However, the effectiveness of these systems depends on accurate registration and record keeping. Where equipment is transferred, sold or disposed of, ownership records should be updated accordingly.

Visible warnings indicating that tools and equipment are forensically marked may also provide an additional deterrent, particularly where thieves intend to sell stolen goods.

Although property marking cannot physically prevent theft, it can complement vehicle locks, secure storage and other protective measures by improving traceability and supporting the recovery of stolen equipment.



Taking vehicles home is essential for many emergency response and maintenance fleets, but residential parking can leave valuable tools and equipment more vulnerable to theft.



Forensic marking and asset identification can help establish ownership and support the recovery of stolen tools and equipment.

The Hidden Cost Of Forced Entry

The financial impact of a break-in is not always determined by what has been stolen.

An attempted theft may result in damaged doors, distorted panels, broken locking mechanisms or compromised security systems, leaving the vehicle unsuitable for operational use.

Where replacement doors or specialist components are required, repair times can be affected by parts availability and workshop capacity. Vehicles with bespoke conversions may present further complications if damaged panels, internal fittings or security installations need to be removed and reinstated.

For operators, the consequences can include replacement vehicle hire, transferring equipment, rearranging workloads and disruption to planned maintenance or service appointments.

This makes the potential cost of vehicle downtime an important consideration when evaluating security investment.

A relatively modest expenditure on door reinforcement or additional protection may be justified where a single attempted break-in could result in substantial repair costs and several days off the road.

Security And The Take-Home Fleet

For fleets whose operatives take vehicles home, security presents a particular challenge.

A vehicle parked within a controlled depot environment may benefit from perimeter protection, CCTV and restricted

access. Once parked on a residential street, those additional safeguards are largely removed.

The situation is further complicated by variations in parking arrangements. Some vehicles may be kept on private driveways, while others are left in shared parking areas or on public roads where access cannot be controlled.

Requiring every employee to remove valuable equipment at the end of a shift may also be impractical, particularly for emergency response and field service operations.

Fleet managers must therefore balance the cost of additional protection against the operational necessity of allowing employees to take vehicles home.

This is particularly relevant for gas engineers, emergency maintenance teams and other essential service operatives who may need to respond outside normal working hours. In some organisations, vehicles are deliberately dispersed across an operational area to improve response times, making centralised overnight parking impractical.

For these fleets, additional mechanical security, reinforced storage and appropriate parking guidance may offer a more practical solution than requiring vehicles to return to a depot each evening.

Tracking and immobilisation systems may assist in preventing or responding to whole-vehicle theft, but in isolation cannot prevent equipment being removed following a forced entry.

Does Branding Influence Security?

Vehicle branding presents another consideration.

Distinctive corporate markings can make stolen vehicles more recognisable and potentially harder to disguise or sell without removing decals or undertaking costly bodywork.

However, branding can also advertise the nature of the equipment carried. A clearly marked plumbing, electrical or specialist maintenance van may indicate the presence of valuable tools and materials, potentially making it more attractive to thieves.

For fleet managers, the decision is not necessarily whether vehicles should be branded, but whether additional security measures are appropriate for the type of work being undertaken and the equipment routinely carried.

Integrating Security Into Fleet Procurement

Manufacturers, converters and specialist security installers can advise on the compatibility of additional locks, reinforced components, secure storage and roof-mounted equipment with particular vehicle models.

Early discussions can also identify potential conflicts with existing locking systems, electrical equipment, door mechanisms and conversion installations.

Where security equipment involves drilling, structural alterations or changes to manufacturer-installed components, fleet operators should establish any implications for warranties, corrosion protection and vehicle approval requirements.

For larger fleets, agreeing a consistent security specification for each vehicle type can simplify procurement, installation, maintenance and replacement.

For vehicles already in service, upgrades may be more economical when undertaken alongside refurbishment or other planned work, reducing the need for additional downtime.

Why Operative Feedback Matters

Operatives can provide valuable feedback on the practicality of additional security measures, particularly where vehicles are accessed frequently throughout the working day.

Repeated lock failures, damaged fittings, difficult access arrangements or security systems that are routinely bypassed may indicate that the original specification is no longer suitable.

Consulting drivers and operatives before specifying security equipment can help identify potential problems early, ensuring additional protection does not unnecessarily compromise day-to-day operations.

No commercial van can be made completely resistant to theft, and additional security will always involve a balance between protection, cost, weight and operational convenience.

For fleet managers, the priority is ensuring that security investment addresses identifiable vulnerabilities, reduces the potential for costly damage and supports the continued availability of vehicles and equipment.●

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Specifying the Right Van Security: What Fleet Managers Need to consider



Choosing aftermarket security is about more than adding another lock. From the type of locking mechanism to key control and layered protection, fleet managers need to consider how each element contributes to a vehicle's overall security. bott's new vanguard+ Hooklock brings a new option to that decision.

When specifying security for a commercial vehicle fleet, there is no single solution that suits every operation. The right approach depends on the vehicles being used, the equipment they carry, where they are parked and the consequences of a vehicle being compromised.

Factory-fitted locking systems provide the starting point, but fleet managers looking to strengthen protection should consider what additional mechanical security can offer, how vulnerable areas might be protected and how access will be managed across the fleet.

Here are some of the key considerations when assessing aftermarket van locks.

UNDERSTAND WHAT THE LOCKING MECHANISM ADDS

Not all aftermarket locks work in the same way. A hooklock operates independently of the vehicle manufacturer's locking mechanism. When engaged, its hook-shaped bolt locks into a receiving point, providing an additional mechanical barrier to unauthorised entry.

The construction of the bolt and lock case is an important consideration when comparing products. Materials, internal design and resistance to different forms of physical attack all influence the specification.

The new vanguard+ Hooklock from bott has been developed around a four-layer laminated stainless-steel hook bolt, housed within an all-stainless-steel lock case with stainless-steel internal components. Hardened anti-drill side plates provide additional protection, while an anti-rattle mechanism helps reduce unwanted movement and noise during use.

In like-for-like testing against the previous Hooklock case, the new design demonstrated 85% improved resistance to upward attack.



LOOK BEYOND THE BOLT

The lock cylinder is another important part of the specification. While the bolt and case provide the mechanical locking action, the cylinder must also be designed to resist attempts to compromise it through the keyway.

The vanguard+ uses a patented six-pin dimple cylinder incorporating anti-pick, hardened anti-drill and anti-snap protection. Its internal plug pins, closing pins, springs and driver pins are all stainless steel, as is the adjustable cam. The cylinder has a black PVD finish and a protective key cover.

For vehicles operating throughout the year in changing weather conditions, durability matters alongside resistance to attack. The cylinder has been corrosion-resistance tested to EN 1670 Grade 4, equivalent to 300+ hours of salt-spray performance.

When comparing aftermarket locks, fleet managers should look at the complete specification, including both the mechanical locking components and the cylinder technology, rather than focusing on one feature in isolation.



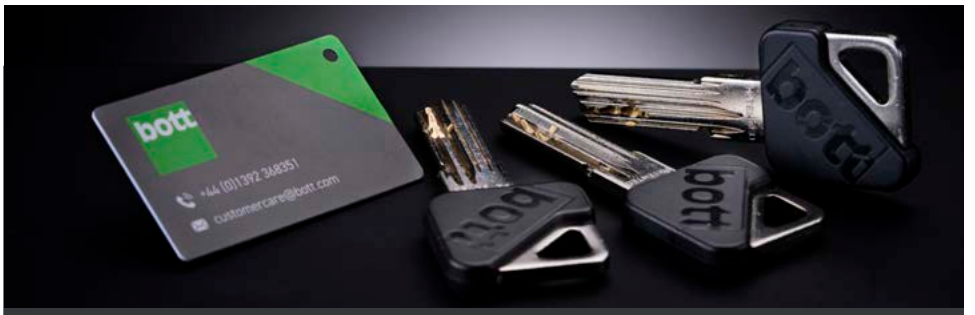
CONSIDER LOCKS AS PART OF A LAYERED APPROACH

An additional lock is one element of a wider vehicle security strategy. Physical shielding can provide another layer of protection by safeguarding vulnerable areas that could otherwise be targeted to gain access.

Internal shields protect components such as door locking mechanisms and cables, helping prevent attackers from drilling or punching holes to reach them, or tampering with cables to operate the doors. External shields offer comparable protection while also acting as a visible deterrent. bott shields are manufactured from 304-grade stainless steel with the option of a silver or durable black powder-coated finish, they can also cover damage on vehicles that have previously been attacked.

Other targeted products, such as loom guards, can help protect vulnerable wiring on susceptible vehicle models. The most appropriate combination will depend on the vehicle and the risks it faces.

The principle is straightforward: rather than relying on a single security measure, fleet managers can consider how mechanical locks, shielding and other targeted protection work together to make unauthorised access more difficult.



FACTOR IN KEY MANAGEMENT AND FLEET OPERATIONS

The practicalities of managing access are just as important as the lock itself. In fleets where vehicles are shared, reassigned or used by multiple employees over time, key control needs to be part of the security plan.

The vanguard+ is supplied with a controlled key system, a security card to support key management and replacement and three premium keys. This provides fleet managers with a defined process for managing replacement keys and helps support oversight of who can access secured vehicles.

A BROADER APPROACH TO COMMERCIAL VEHICLE EQUIPMENT

It is also worth considering how additional security will be specified and installed across the fleet. A consistent approach can help ensure that the protection selected is appropriate for each vehicle and its intended use.

The vanguard+ Hooklock will be available from **early December** through a nationwide network of lock installation partners. This gives fleet managers a route to specifying the new product across their vehicles, supported by a network focused on aftermarket vehicle security.

Ultimately, specifying the right lock means looking at more than the product in isolation. Understanding the locking mechanism, considering vulnerable areas and planning for key control all contribute to a more informed security specification.

With the vanguard+ Hooklock, bott is bringing a newly developed security product into a wider commercial vehicle portfolio spanning storage, carrying systems and workplace equipment.●

For more information, visit: **www.bott.uk/solutions/products/van-security**





Protecting Against Commercial Fleet Crime with a Multi-Layered Security Approach

Commercial vehicle crime remains a costly and persistent problem for fleet operators. Reported incidents of HGV cargo crime reached 3,424 in 2025, equivalent to more than nine incidents every day. During the same period, more than 9,522 vans were reported stolen, with many more targeted for their tools, equipment and other valuable contents.

Organised criminal groups increasingly view commercial vehicles as high-value, relatively accessible targets, using both traditional theft methods and increasingly sophisticated technology to exploit vulnerabilities.

"The threat to vehicles, trailers, loads, fuel and parts is huge, resulting in hundreds of millions of pounds of losses each year. Commercial vehicle crime can no longer be viewed as an occasional operational loss that fleet operators simply absorb," explains Alejandro Patino, Vice President of Global Sales at Queclink Wireless Solutions.

"This growing security risk now influences where commercial vehicles travel, where drivers can stop, how goods are insured and how much contingency operators need to build into every journey."

Jason Craven, Director of Connected Vehicle Solutions (CVS), says that commercial vehicle crime represents a serious and often underestimated risk.

"The value of a stolen vehicle, trailer or load is only part of the loss. You also must factor in other associated losses such as operational downtime, missed deliveries, increased insurance premiums and reputational damage. Most importantly, you then need to consider the impact on drivers and their welfare, especially if the theft involves injury or harm."

An Evolving Threat

Commercial vehicle crime has become more organised, targeted and technology-led. Criminals are increasingly selective in their choice of vehicles and loads, looking for vulnerabilities that offer the greatest opportunity for financial gain.

Strategic theft involving deception, impersonation and cyber scams is becoming more prevalent, although physical theft of HGVs, vans and their loads remains one of the most common forms of commercial vehicle crime.

According to CVS' Jason Craven, traditional methods such as stolen keys, forced entry and curtain slashing still account for a significant proportion of incidents. However, as vehicle security improves, criminals are adapting their techniques.

"We are seeing greater use of relay devices, key-emulation equipment, signal jammers and electronic tools, which means transport operators cannot simply install a solution once and assume the risk has been permanently addressed."

For fleet operators, this means reviewing security arrangements regularly rather than relying on measures installed when vehicles first entered service.

Building Layers of Protection

There is no single security solution suitable for every fleet. Vehicle types, operating environments, equipment, cargo and working patterns all influence the level and type of protection required.

The most effective approach combines people, operational procedures, physical security and technology, with measures selected according to the risks faced by individual vehicles and their intended use.

The starting point should be a risk assessment covering the vehicle, driver, cargo, routes, parking locations, operating hours and likely criminal activity. Fleets operators should also consider vehicles that are routinely left unattended at remote sites, carry specialist tools or operate outside normal working hours.

"By understanding the risk within a fleet operation, it is possible to create layers of protection that target the biggest vulnerabilities and threats," claims Jason.

"These might include secure key







management, driver training, immobilisation, physical locking systems, cameras, powered vehicle tracking, unpowered asset tracking, door sensors, geo zones and 24-hour monitoring. The available tools and techniques are many and varied, so it is about blending the right combination based on precise requirements."

Queclink's Alejandro Patino agrees that the most effective approach combines different types of security solutions.

"From a hardware perspective, a fleet operator should start by asking how someone would most likely steal from their operation. They can then design a system that provides the necessary levels of monitoring, visibility and response."

This approach allows fleet operators to prioritise investment according to the risks involved, rather than applying the same security measures to every vehicle regardless of its role. Using Technology to Detect and Respond

A broad range of security technology is now available, from basic vehicle tracking to monitored stolen-vehicle recovery systems, with additional features including driver identification, remote immobilisation, geozoning and tamper detection.

For additional protection, a covert secondary tracker can be installed to provide an alternative means of locating a vehicle if the primary tracking device is discovered or disabled. Such devices can remain dormant until required, making them more difficult for criminals to identify.

Advances in camera technology and battery-powered trackers are also creating opportunities to improve the monitoring of vehicles, trailers and equipment, including assets without a permanent power supply.

James Tyrrell, Global Telematics Lead Engineer at Brigade Electronics, says commercial fleet operators are increasingly recognising how established technologies can be used to address specific security threats, including fuel theft and incidents involving moving vehicles.

"Systems primarily used for safety can play a greater role in preventing vehicle and fuel-related crime. By combining artificial intelligence, camera systems and sensor technology, operators can gain faster alerts and improved visibility when suspicious activity occurs."

For operators already using cameras and telematics for safety and fleet management, this presents an opportunity to assess whether existing systems could provide additional security benefits.

Connecting the Information

The use of artificial intelligence, connected sensors and behavioural analytics is expected to play an increasingly important role in commercial vehicle security.

Rather than relying on individual alerts, emerging systems can analyse information from several sources simultaneously, helping to identify patterns of suspicious activity and determine whether intervention may be required.

For fleet operators responsible for large numbers of vehicles, this could help reduce the time spent reviewing separate notifications and improve the speed at which genuine threats are identified.

"Today, a platform might receive an unplanned-stop alert, a door notification, a camera event and a warning that external power has been disconnected. If these are presented separately, the fleet manager still must determine whether they are connected, but there is now an opportunity to correlate them and identify certain combinations that represent a threat," explains Alejandro Patino.

The ability to link these events could help operators distinguish between routine operational activity and incidents requiring immediate attention. It may also provide a clearer picture of recurring security risks across a fleet.

Jason Craven believes the objective should be to identify and respond to suspicious activity before a theft is completed, rather than relying solely on recovery afterwards.

"The ultimate purpose is to deter the theft, detect suspicious activity quickly and provide the information needed to respond and recover the asset. However, prevention is always better and considerably cheaper than dealing with the consequences, so the objective is not simply alerting that an asset has disappeared. It is to identify unusual activity earlier, support a faster response and provide the best possible opportunity to prevent the theft or recover the vehicle, cargo or equipment."

Keeping Ahead of Criminals

Although connected technology offers considerable security benefits, it also introduces additional vulnerabilities that fleet operators need to consider. As vehicles become more connected and security systems increasingly share information, protection against cyber threats is becoming an important part of fleet security.

Continued on page **28** ▸▸







"As vehicles become increasingly connected and different technologies integrate, digital security must be considered alongside traditional physical security. Thatcham Research has highlighted that connectivity introduces a distinct cyber dimension to commercial vehicle crime," warns **Jason Craven.**

Another challenge is that individual security technologies can become less effective as criminals learn how they operate. Once thieves understand how a commonly used tracking device communicates, where it is typically installed, or how an operator responds to an alert, they can begin adapting their methods to avoid detection.

To counter this, **Alejandro Patino** believes the next stage of development will focus on making security systems more adaptive.

"The most valuable innovation will be technology that makes security more adaptive," **Patino explains**. *"We need devices that change reporting behaviour when tampering is detected, platforms that distinguish a normal signal loss from deliberate interference, and systems that reveal as little as possible about the recovery layer before it is needed."*

This reinforces the importance of reviewing security arrangements as threats evolve, ensuring that equipment, procedures, and response plans remain appropriate for the vehicles and assets being protected.

From Recovery to Prevention

Commercial vehicle crime continues to evolve, and fleet security must evolve with it. While physical protection, driver awareness and established operational procedures remain fundamental, connected technology is providing new opportunities to detect suspicious activity earlier and improve the response to potential theft.

For fleet operators, the priority is to understand where vehicles, equipment and personnel are most vulnerable and build appropriate layers of protection around those risks.

Combining physical security, effective procedures, vehicle tracking, camera systems and increasingly intelligent monitoring can help fleets move beyond simply recovering stolen assets towards preventing incidents wherever possible.

Ultimately, the objective is not just to protect the value of vehicles and equipment, but to minimise disruption, safeguard drivers and maintain the continuity of the services those vehicles support.●

KEY ELEMENTS OF A MULTI-LAYERED SECURITY STRATEGY

PHYSICAL SECURITY
Locks, secure parking and asset protection to deter theft.

VEHICLE TRACKING
Real-time location and geofencing.

VIDEO TELEMATICS
Detects incidents and unusual activity.

OPERATIONAL PROCESSES
Clear procedures and regular reviews.

DRIVER AWARENESS
Training and engagement.

INTELLIGENT ANALYSIS
AI and data correlation to identify risk earlier.



Ayvens Partners with **Fellten** to Offer **Flexible EV Charging**

Ayvens, a leading global sustainable mobility player, has partnered with Fellten, the British battery storage and EV charging technology company behind Charge Qube, to give UK fleet operators a more flexible way to access high-power EV charging.

Under the partnership, Ayvens customers will have access to Charge Qube, a mobile Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) with built-in high-power EV charging.

The containerised system can be deployed and made operational within hours, allowing businesses to add charging capacity where and when they need it.

Charge Qube stores electricity and delivers rapid DC charging from existing site power, helping fleets overcome the constrains of local grid capacity without waiting for a grid upgrade or permanent infrastructure installation. This can help avoid lengthy connection queues and costly infrastructure upgrades, which can otherwise delay electrification plans by months or even years.

The solution is particularly suited to fleets with complex or changing charging requirements, including mission-critical operations in remote or temporary locations where a conventional charging installation may not be practical.

Russ Boulton, Head of Customer Data and Innovation at Ayvens, said:

"Electrification isn't a one-size-fits-all journey. Every fleet has different requirements, and for some of our customers, the practical challenges of accessing the power they need can be just as significant as choosing the right vehicles or charging infrastructure.

"At Ayvens, we're always looking for innovative solutions that can help our customers make their fleets more sustainable, particularly where their electrification needs are more complex. Charge Qube gives us another option to help customers overcome those challenges, providing flexible charging capacity where a conventional grid connection may not be practical or available. This partnership is about giving our customers more ways to keep their electrification plans moving."

Mike Ellenthorpe, General Manager at Fellten, said:

"Access to power is becoming one of the biggest practical challenges facing fleet electrification. A fleet can have the vehicles, the ambition and the funding to make the switch, but if the grid can't deliver the power where it's needed, the whole project can stall.

"Charge Qube changes that equation. By combining battery storage with high-power DC charging in a mobile, containerised system, it can be deployed and made operational within hours, giving fleets the charging capacity they need without waiting for a permanent grid connection. Through our partnership with Ayvens, we're making that flexibility available to customers with some of the most challenging charging requirements.".●







Vehicle Visibility and Protection – Seeing, Being Seen and Reducing Risk

From reflective markings and warning lights to 360-degree camera systems, blind-spot detection and physical under-run protection, commercial vehicle safety relies on a combination of measures. For fleet operators, the challenge is ensuring vehicles are visible to other road users, drivers can identify hazards around them and appropriate procedures are in place when visibility is restricted.

Whether a refuse collection vehicle is manoeuvring through a housing estate or a highways vehicle is working alongside live traffic, visibility plays a fundamental role in reducing risk.

There are two important considerations: making vehicles clearly visible to others and providing drivers with the best possible view of their surroundings, including areas that cannot be seen directly from the cab.

Neither can eliminate every risk, making vehicle specification, safety equipment, driver awareness and safe working procedures equally important.

Making Commercial Vehicles More Visible

High-visibility markings are widely used across highways, utilities, construction and maintenance fleets.

Reflective materials improve vehicle conspicuity in darkness and poor light, helping approaching drivers recognise a vehicle's presence and position.

The Department for Transport's Traffic Signs Manual, Chapter 8, provides guidance relevant to vehicles used in temporary traffic management and highway operations. Specific marking requirements may also arise through contracts or operational standards.

For other commercial vehicles, the appropriate level of conspicuity depends on their operating environment and associated risks.

Amber warning beacons and other approved warning lights provide additional visibility, alerting road users to vehicles that may be stationary, moving slowly or undertaking work requiring extra caution.

Regular inspection is essential, as dirty or damaged reflective markings, defective beacons and obscured lights can compromise their effectiveness.

The Challenge of Restricted Driver Visibility

Commercial vehicles can have significant areas around their bodywork that drivers cannot observe directly. These vary according to vehicle design, cab height, glazing, mirrors and the positioning of specialist equipment.

For vans, restricted visibility can be particularly problematic when reversing or manoeuvring in confined service areas.

Larger commercial vehicles present additional challenges because of their dimensions and the proximity of pedestrians and cyclists to the sides of the vehicle.

A driver may have a clear view of the road ahead while remaining unaware of someone standing close to the vehicle or approaching from an obscured direction.

Visibility should therefore be considered during vehicle procurement and conversion, rather than relying entirely on equipment fitted after delivery.

All-Round Camera Systems – Extending the Driver's View

Camera technology has become an important part of commercial vehicle safety.

While reversing cameras are familiar equipment across many fleets, more comprehensive systems provide coverage of the front, sides and rear of a vehicle.

Multi-camera systems can display individual views or combine images to create a composite, bird's-eye representation of the surrounding area.

Often described as 360-degree or all-round vision systems, these are particularly useful during low-speed manoeuvres, helping drivers identify obstacles and road users that might otherwise be difficult to see.

For refuse collection vehicles, construction equipment and specialist commercial vehicles, additional camera coverage can provide valuable assistance in restricted environments.

However, effectiveness depends on camera positioning, image quality, calibration and the driver's ability to interpret the information displayed.

A 360-degree display does not necessarily provide an uninterrupted view of every area around the vehicle. Blind spots may remain, while objects can appear obscured or distorted in combined images.

Lenses can also be affected by dirt, spray, condensation, snow and ice, making regular checks and driver training essential.

Blind-Spot Detection and Driver Warnings

Alongside cameras, radar and other sensor-based technologies provide additional protection by detecting objects or road users within defined areas.

Blind-spot information systems can alert drivers to cyclists or pedestrians alongside a vehicle, particularly when preparing to turn.

Moving-off information systems help identify vulnerable road users positioned close to the front of a stationary vehicle as it begins to move.

Depending on the equipment installed, warnings may be delivered through dashboard displays, audible alerts or visual indicators.

More advanced systems can distinguish between different road users or assess vehicle movement to identify potentially hazardous situations.



However, detection systems are not infallible. Their performance depends on the technology, installation and operating conditions, and drivers must understand how to respond to warnings.

When Technology Is Not Enough – The Role of Banksmen

Even vehicles equipped with cameras and proximity sensors can encounter situations where the driver cannot safely observe the entire manoeuvring area.

This is particularly relevant when reversing large vehicles, entering confined sites or working where pedestrians, employees or other vehicles may move unpredictably.

Where a manoeuvre cannot be avoided and visibility is insufficient, a properly trained banksman or vehicle marshal may be required as part of the safe system of work.

A banksman can help guide the driver, identify hazards and coordinate vehicle movements.

Clear procedures are essential. Drivers and banksmen should agree recognised signals and communication arrangements before the manoeuvre begins.

The banksman must remain in a safe position, and the driver should stop immediately if visual contact or communication is lost.

HGV Safety – The Progressive Safe System

For operators of heavier commercial vehicles, visibility and vulnerable road user protection also form part of specific regulatory requirements.

Transport for London's Direct Vision Standard (DVS) applies to HGVs over 12 tonnes gross vehicle weight entering or operating within most of Greater London.

The standard assesses how much a driver can see directly through the cab windows, with vehicles receiving a rating from zero to five stars.

Since October 2024, HGVs rated below three stars have been required to meet the Progressive Safe System (PSS) requirements to obtain a valid HGV safety permit.

The PSS includes measures to address restricted visibility, including camera monitoring, blind-spot information systems, moving-off detection, audible turning warnings and external warning signage.

It also includes requirements relating to side under-run protection, subject to applicable exemptions.

Although these DVS requirements apply within the relevant London area, the underlying principles have wider relevance for fleet operators considering vehicle safety specifications.

Under-Run Protection – Reducing the Consequences of Collisions

While cameras and detection systems aim to help prevent collisions, physical protection measures are designed to reduce their consequences.

Side under-run protection, commonly referred to as sideguards, helps prevent pedestrians, cyclists and other road users from falling or being drawn beneath the sides of larger goods vehicles.

National construction and use requirements already apply to many goods vehicles, although exemptions and vehicle-specific provisions mean the rules are not identical for every vehicle.

For fleet operators, ensuring appropriate protection is fitted, maintained and suitable for the vehicle's intended operation is an important part of managing risk.

Maintaining Protection Throughout Vehicle Life

Visibility and safety systems must be maintained. Camera lenses and sensors should be kept clean and checked for damage, while warning lights and reflective markings should form part of routine vehicle inspections.

Drivers should report defective equipment promptly. Fleet operators should also review incidents and near misses involving reversing, turning or restricted visibility to identify opportunities for improvement.

Changes to vehicle bodywork, equipment installations or operating duties may require a reassessment of the original safety specification.

No single system can eliminate every risk, but together these measures can help protect employees, pedestrians, cyclists and other road users.●









On Track with **Fleetclear: AI Takes Fleet Safety Beyond** the **Vehicle**



Fleetclear brought together fleet, waste management, local authority and logistics professionals at the former Top Gear test track to demonstrate how its latest AI-powered innovation, StreetVision, is turning everyday journeys into valuable operational intelligence.

In early September, Fleetclear hosted its latest On Track event at Dunsfold Aerodrome, combining live demonstrations of its vehicle safety technology with the chance for guests to experience the famous test track first-hand.

At the heart of the event was StreetVision, a new platform that uses AI for large-scale image analysis to transform footage from cameras already fitted to vehicles into actionable intelligence to support operational decision-making.



StreetVision in Focus

Two 26-tonne refuse collection vehicles (RCVs), equipped with and branded for StreetVision, took centre stage. Visitors could explore the technology, see it in action and discuss how AI and visual intelligence could help address operational challenges and improve fleet safety.

Reversing is one area where StreetVision is already making a difference. For RCVs, the system analyses reversing manoeuvres, checking for nearby pedestrians, the correct positioning of crew members and PPE compliance. These are risks that occasional observation alone cannot fully capture.

Privacy is central to the system's design, with the focus on procedures and outcomes rather than individuals.

Mike Crowther, Business Development Director at Fleetclear, said: *"Putting StreetVision in front of customers and partners at OnTrack was the best way to show it. People could see what it does and put their questions to us straight away."*

Turning Footage into Intelligence

Fleet technology has traditionally focused on the vehicle itself, its location, how it is driven and how efficiently it operates. StreetVision extends that focus to the wider environment, using AI to extract useful intelligence from the visual data vehicles collect as they go about their daily work.

Fleetclear Chief Technology Officer Chris Waller believes the technology represents a significant shift in how vehicle cameras can be used:

"The technology behind StreetVision isn't about capturing more footage - it's about knowing what to do with it. That's where the real value is - cutting through the noise and surfacing what matters.

"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."

Industry Expertise on Show

The event also brought together a range of established industry names. Hillend Engineering, Endurance Vehicle Solutions, Bartec, Dennis Eagle and VWS exhibited in the main marquee, giving guests the opportunity to discuss a range of operational challenges and explore solutions with industry specialists.

"We were delighted to be part of the OnTrack event. It was well organised and as an exhibitor we had a productive day talking to representatives from a broad range of private and public sector organisations.

"We've used Fleetclear camera systems and safety equipment on our demonstration fleet for years and we've always been impressed by the quality and user friendliness of their products. The StreetVision system and new range of AI enhanced technologies are very impressive."

Stuart Collett, Commercial and Export Sales Manager, Hillend Engineering Ltd



Technology Meets the Track

Alongside the StreetVision demonstrations, guests could speak directly with Fleetclear's team and see other safety technologies in action. These included the Vehicle Lift Information System (VLIS), which monitors the danger zone around a vehicle's lifting equipment to help protect operatives during bin-lifting and a new heat-detection solution for monitoring inside the hopper section of refuse vehicles to provide an early warning of rising temperatures and help operators respond sooner to potential fire risks.

The event also built on Fleetclear's previous On Track events, which in 2025 included the launch of its award-winning Live Lane Information System.

Between demonstrations and discussions, guests took to the former Top Gear test track, starting with a familiarisation lap led by a professional instructor. Once comfortable with the circuit, they could choose from a selection of supercars and take the wheel themselves.

A Competitive Edge

There was also a competitive element to the day, with two activities giving guests the chance to test their skills and win prizes.

The first focused on Fleetclear Go, the company's mobile-first compliance app, which brings vehicle checks, defect reporting and operational audits together in one place, reducing the need for traditional paperwork.

Guests competed to complete an accurate vehicle inspection in the quickest time, with the winner taking home a bottle of bubbly.

A second activity offered the chance to win a drone. Guests earned entry into the prize draw by collecting stamps from demonstrations and partner stands in an Event Passport.

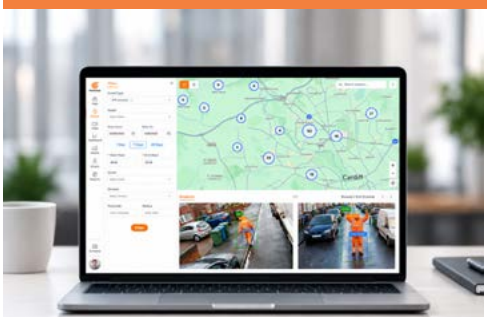
Looking ahead

The positive response to the event reinforced the value of giving fleet operators the opportunity to see new technology in action, ask questions and discuss practical applications face to face.

Fleetclear plans to build on that response by hosting further On Track events, bringing industry professionals together to explore emerging vehicle technologies in a hands-on setting.●



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



For more information about StreetVision and other Fleetclear products, or to register for future On Track events, visit fleetclear.com, email info@fleetclear.com or call 01386 630155.

Fleetclear



From **Global Prototype** to **Nationwide Service Fleet**

How **bott** and **Mercedes-Benz UK** turned a conversion concept into a growing partnership

The Challenge: **Adapting a Global Specification for UK Engineers**

The relationship between bott and Mercedes-Benz began at a global level, with bott supporting the development of a prototype service van conversion for Mercedes-Benz in Germany. In 2025, that concept was brought to the UK as part of a programme to deploy a fleet of Mobile Service Vans designed to support major national customers including Amazon, Next and Asda.

The objective appeared straightforward: take the existing specification and implement it for Mercedes-Benz UK's service operation. However, Dave Hitchman and the Mercedes-Benz UK team recognised that a successful deployment would require more than simply replicating the German design.

Service engineers operate in demanding environments, often working under significant time pressure and carrying specialist tools and lifting equipment that must be accessed quickly, safely and efficiently. The challenge was to create a conversion that retained the strengths of the original concept while ensuring it met the practical realities of the UK operation.

The Solution: **Improving the Original Design**

Working closely with Dave Hitchman and the Mercedes-Benz UK team, Daryl Pearson and the bott team reviewed the original German specification in detail.

Rather than treating the design as fixed, bott challenged itself to identify opportunities for improvement. One area quickly emerged as a focus: the winch mechanism used to deploy lifting equipment from the vehicle via a trolley system.

While the original design met the operational requirement, bott's engineers believed the electrical elements of the system could be redesigned to improve functionality and efficiency.

By applying expertise from across the business, including electrical engineering and vehicle conversion specialists, the team developed an alternative solution that reduced space requirements, improved usability and simplified deployment.



The result was a conversion that enabled engineers to deploy the trolley, set up the lifting equipment and be ready to work in less than ten minutes.

The wider conversion programme also demonstrated the strength of bott's integrated approach. Electrical engineering, CAD design, graphics, decals and vehicle conversion teams worked together from a single location, ensuring that every aspect of the project could be managed seamlessly through one partner.





Pictured (L to R): Dave Hitchman (Mercedes-Benz UK), Daryl Pearson, Amanda Leithead and Kimberley Smith (bott UK).

The Partnership: Taking Ownership from End to End

For Mercedes-Benz UK, one of the greatest advantages of working with bott has been the ability to rely on a single partner capable of managing the entire conversion process.

Rather than coordinating multiple suppliers across different specialisms, Mercedes-Benz benefited from a single point of accountability covering design, engineering, conversion, graphics and ongoing support.

This approach reflects bott's wider philosophy of designing solutions around the customer's world. Rather than simply delivering against a specification, the team worked collaboratively with Mercedes-Benz to understand how engineers used their vehicles and identify opportunities to improve the operational experience. Importantly, bott's involvement did not end once the first vehicles entered service.

The partnership has continued to evolve, with both businesses committed to refining and improving the specification as operational requirements change.

The Outcome: Creating a Platform for Continued Innovation

What began as the adaptation of a global prototype has evolved into a strategic partnership supporting Mercedes-Benz UK's nationwide Mobile Service Van programme.

Today, 30 Mobile Service Vans are deployed across the UK, supporting major fleet customers including Amazon, Next and Asda. The success of the project has demonstrated the value of combining global best practice with local operational expertise and has created a platform for further innovation between the two organisations.

The positive evolution of the relationship has also led to collaboration on a range of additional projects. These include smaller Vito-based Mobile Service Vans, car-derived service vehicles, combined service specifications and parts delivery concepts. The partnership has further expanded into opportunities across the wider Mercedes-Benz and Daimler Truck dealer network, creating a broader platform for future conversion, graphics and fleet support programmes.

The programme demonstrates the value of challenging assumptions and continuously improving solutions. By applying local expertise to a global concept, bott helped Mercedes-Benz UK create a conversion that improved on the original design while remaining true to the operational requirements of its engineers.

Most importantly, it has created a framework for ongoing innovation, ensuring future vehicle concepts can continue to evolve alongside Mercedes-Benz UK's operational needs.



Dave Hitchman, Mercedes-Benz UK

"It wasn't just about putting racking in a van. It was about understanding how our engineers work, what they need access to and how quickly they need to get in and out of the vehicle. bott took complete ownership of the process from start to finish. We didn't have to worry about coordinating different suppliers or chasing different people. bott just handled it. The collaboration between the two businesses has been absolutely superb."

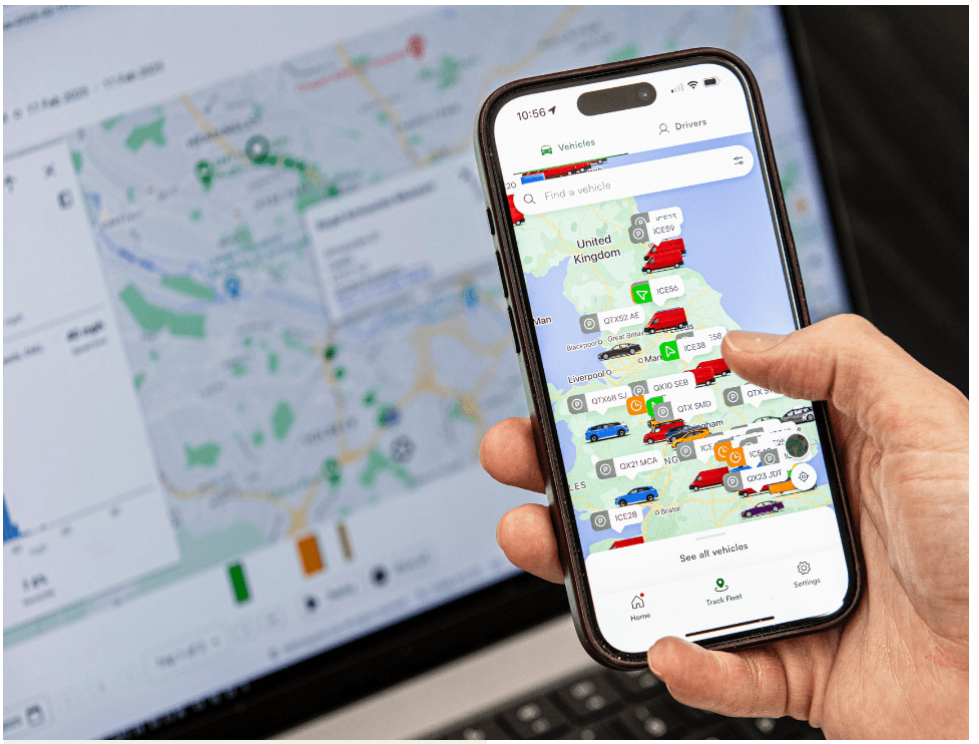
Kim Smith, UK Head of Direct/Fleet Sales, Bott Ltd

"The best partnerships are built on continuous improvement. The Mobile Service Van programme started with a single conversion concept, but by challenging assumptions and understanding how Mercedes-Benz engineers operate in the field, we've been able to improve the original specification and support a growing range of vehicle programmes. We're proud of what we've achieved together and excited about the next phase of the relationship."●

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

Quartix
TRACKING FOR 25 YEARS

Work Safe, Home Safe: How Morson Vital is Raising the Bar on Road Safety



Working on live rail infrastructure is, by any measure, a high-risk occupation. But for Morson Vital, which places thousands of specialist rail contractors onto projects across the UK, the risks don't begin and end on the tracks. With a fleet of over 650 vans that contractors take home and drive to site each day, sometimes collecting colleagues along the way – safety is managed every step of the way.

Morson Vital has been a Quartix customer since 2014, and Fleet Manager Keith Woodcock has overseen the operation for 17 years, watching it grow to more than 650 LCVs deployed across 23 offices nationwide. Over that decade-long partnership, the way Morson Vital uses the Quartix fleet tracking system has evolved considerably, from basic fleet visibility to a fully integrated safety operation.

"Your shift starts the minute you get in the van," Keith tells his contractors, *"And it only finishes when you get home." That philosophy, captured in the company motto Work Safe: Home Safe printed on every vehicle, is the principle that underpins every decision the fleet team makes."*

Reframing the Risk Conversation

At Morson Vital, driving is positioned within the organisation's broader safety culture. Even though many operatives work in hazardous environments, operating cranes, working on live rail infrastructure, Keith is clear that the road journey carries equal, if not greater, risk.

It's a point we hear echoed by fleet managers across industries, and one that challenges the tendency to treat driving as a background activity rather than a skilled, high-stakes task.

Fatigue: The Hidden Threat

With rail blockades requiring 24-hour availability and contractors sometimes travelling significant distances before a shift begins, fatigue is a constant concern. Door-to-door hours are monitored through the Quartix telematics system in line with strict Network Rail policy, drivers complete a fit-to-drive declaration on the Quartix app at the start of each shift, and hotel stays are arranged when a journey would otherwise push someone into what the team describes as a "red-risk" shift. Quartix geofencing alerts flag vehicle use outside scheduled hours, and driver ID technology maintains a clear, auditable record of who was behind the wheel at any given time.

Keeping Vehicles Road-Ready

Before a single journey begins, Morson Vital also relies on digital vehicle checks to ensure every van is safe to go out on shift. Using the Quartix Check app, drivers complete inspections before each shift with defects reported instantly, often reaching maintenance providers the same day. It's a straightforward process that has dramatically reduced out-of-hours breakdowns and gives the fleet team a live view of vehicle condition across all 23 depots.

The Insurance Savings

The numbers from Morson Vital's experience make a compelling case for investment in integrated fleet technology. Before introducing Quartix dashcams and crash data, the business carried an insurance claims lost ratio of 87%. With forward and driver-facing Quartix cameras and integrated telematics now in place, that figure has dropped to 32% - a 55-point improvement saving tens of thousands of pounds each year.

Beyond the financial return, the operational benefits are equally significant. Footage has resolved disputes, clarified responsibility for vehicle damage and accelerated incident response. If there is a collision or incident, the team knows about it immediately and can act without delay. The cameras have also proven to be a powerful behaviour-change tool: driving scores frequently improve as soon as they are installed, before any formal intervention takes place.

Building a Safety Culture

Over its decade-long partnership with Quartix, Morson Vital has built a culture of accountability reinforced by the right data at the right time. Driving scores reviewed weekly. Fuel anomalies challenged. Vehicles kept roadworthy through proactive monitoring. Every element working together toward the same goal.

For fleet managers, the takeaway is: a successful safety culture requires deliberate investment, consistent measurement and visible commitment, from the boardroom to the slogan on the side of the van.●

If your fleet's safety culture needs a stronger foundation, **Quartix** *can help. Visit* **quartix.com** *or call* **01686 806 663**



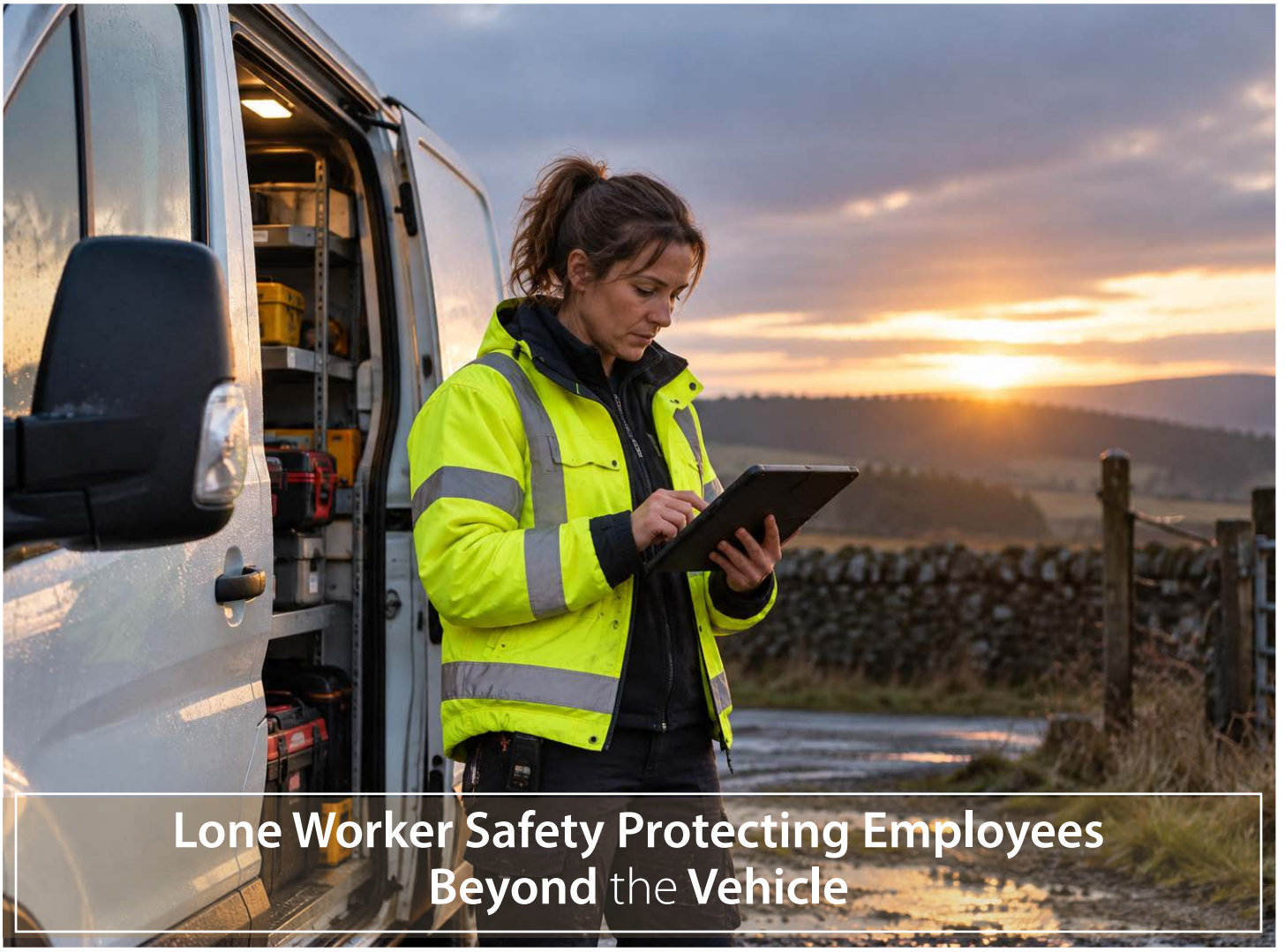
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Lone Worker Safety Protecting Employees Beyond the Vehicle

For many employees working across essential services, the working day begins not at an office or depot, but at home, followed by a journey to a tenant's property, roadside location or remote operational site.

From housing maintenance operatives and NHS community staff to utilities engineers, highways teams and environmental services personnel, many employees spend much of their working day without direct supervision or immediate access to assistance.

For fleet and transport managers, this presents a challenge that extends beyond vehicle safety. Vehicles may be well maintained, fitted with telematics and supported by comprehensive breakdown arrangements, but these measures do not necessarily protect employees once they leave the vehicle.

An engineer working inside a property or a highways operative attending an isolated location may face risks that conventional fleet monitoring cannot identify. The challenge is not simply knowing where a vehicle is located, but ensuring employees can obtain assistance when something goes wrong.

Understanding the Risks

Lone working is not new, but managing geographically dispersed workforces requires organisations to consider the different environments in which employees operate.

A housing operative attending a repair may encounter threatening behaviour. A utilities engineer inspecting remote infrastructure may have limited mobile reception, while a highways worker could be exposed to passing traffic or adverse weather.

Without immediate support, even relatively minor incidents can have serious consequences. A workplace accident, medical emergency or confrontation may go unnoticed until a scheduled contact is missed.

Risk assessments must therefore reflect the work being undertaken rather than relying on a single approach for every employee. Working alone at an occupied property presents different challenges from attending remote infrastructure or carrying out routine service visits.

A Legal Responsibility

Under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, employers must protect employees' health, safety and welfare, so far as is reasonably practicable. The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 also require appropriate risk assessments and control measures.

These responsibilities extend to employees working alone, whether travelling between appointments or undertaking duties away from a central workplace.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) advises employers to consider risks including violence, stress, medical emergencies and the working environment. Appropriate training, supervision, monitoring and emergency arrangements are essential. Some activities may be unsuitable for lone working where risks cannot be adequately controlled.



Technology can improve protection, but its effectiveness ultimately depends on whether an alert reaches someone capable of responding.

Protection against threatening behaviour is particularly relevant to public-facing employees. Housing maintenance teams, enforcement personnel and other workers entering occupied properties may encounter aggression or harassment.

The Employment Rights Act 2025 also introduces stronger workplace harassment provisions, including responsibilities concerning third-party harassment. Alongside existing health and safety duties, this reinforces the importance of preventative measures.

Where previous incidents or particular locations indicate increased risk, accompanied visits or alternative working arrangements may be necessary. Employees should understand that completing a task must never take priority over their personal safety.

Beyond Vehicle Tracking

Fleet operators increasingly use telematics to monitor vehicle location, utilisation and driver behaviour. However, knowing where a vehicle is parked provides little information about the safety of its driver.

A van outside a tenant's property may confirm an employee has arrived, but cannot indicate whether they are experiencing difficulties inside. Similarly, a stationary vehicle at a remote site does not necessarily suggest an emergency.

Telematics can provide valuable information when locating employees or identifying unexpected interruptions to journeys. Some systems also incorporate emergency alerts or integrate with workforce management platforms.

Nevertheless, vehicle tracking should support, rather than replace, arrangements for monitoring employee welfare.

Technology and Personal Protection

Developments in personal safety technology offer additional protection for mobile employees.

Smartphone applications can allow workers to register their arrival at appointments, complete scheduled welfare checks and raise emergency alerts.

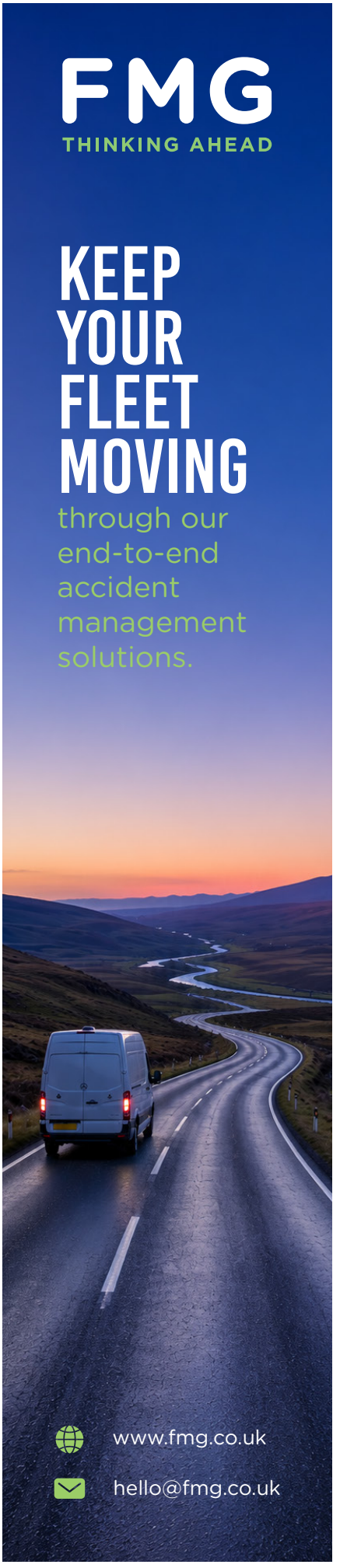
Wearable devices and discreet personal alarms may be particularly useful in higher-risk environments where making a telephone call could escalate a confrontation. Some incorporate automatic fall detection or inactivity alerts, while monitored services can provide access to trained personnel who assess incidents and initiate agreed responses.

However, equipment must be appropriate for the individual and their working environment.

An employee attending routine appointments may require different protection from an engineer working in an isolated location. Mobile coverage, battery life, location accuracy and ease of operation must all be considered, particularly where employees wear gloves or protective equipment.

For remote operations, reliance on mobile networks may create additional vulnerabilities, making alternative communication arrangements necessary.

Technology can improve protection, but its effectiveness ultimately depends on whether an alert reaches someone capable of responding.



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A personal alarm offers limited reassurance without clear procedures for responding to it.



When an Emergency Occurs

A personal alarm offers limited reassurance without clear procedures for responding to it.

Employers need to establish who receives emergency alerts, how incidents are assessed and what happens when an employee cannot be contacted.

These arrangements are particularly important for organisations providing essential services outside normal working hours, including emergency maintenance, utilities repairs and highways response.

Procedures should cover missed welfare checks, failed communications and situations requiring assistance from emergency services.

Where external monitoring providers are used, organisations should understand the service's capabilities, escalation arrangements and responsibilities.

Regular testing is equally important. Systems that work during demonstrations may encounter difficulties during genuine emergencies, particularly where communications are unreliable or information is incomplete.

Isolation, Fatigue and Wellbeing

Physical safety is only one consideration. Employees working independently across large geographical areas may experience isolation, demanding schedules and extended periods behind the wheel.

Fatigue can affect concentration, driving performance and decision-making, increasing risks both during journeys and at work locations.

Fleet and operational managers should ensure journey planning, working hours and job allocations are realistic, allowing sufficient time for breaks and unexpected delays.

Regular communication should provide opportunities to identify concerns rather than simply confirm that employees remain on schedule.

Supervision arrangements must also reflect the needs of workers who rarely visit a depot or office and may have limited face-to-face contact with colleagues.

Turning Policy Into Practical Protection

Effective lone worker protection requires cooperation between fleet, operational and health and safety teams.

Fleet departments may oversee vehicles, telematics, roadside assistance and emergency equipment. Operational managers control schedules, work allocation and supervision, while health and safety teams establish risk assessments and protective procedures.

Unless these responsibilities are coordinated, important gaps can develop.

For example, vehicle location information may be available but inaccessible to the person managing an emergency. Alternatively, employees may have personal alarms without knowing who receives their alerts.

Vehicle specification also has a role. Employees attending remote locations may require emergency supplies, suitable vehicle capabilities or specialist communications equipment. Breakdown arrangements should consider whether someone could be left waiting alone in an unsafe environment.

Training should ensure employees recognise developing risks, understand emergency procedures and know when to stop work or withdraw from a situation.

Consulting employees is equally valuable. Those undertaking the work can often identify weaknesses that are overlooked during planning, including unreliable communications, unsuitable equipment or unrealistic appointment schedules.

Procedures should be reviewed following incidents, changes in working practices and employee feedback.

Protecting the Person Behind the Wheel

For essential service fleets, lone worker protection extends well beyond the journey itself.

Vehicles take employees into homes, public spaces, roadside environments and remote locations where immediate assistance may not be available.

Vehicle maintenance, driver monitoring and roadside support remain important, but effective protection also requires appropriate risk assessments, reliable communications, practical safety equipment and clearly defined emergency procedures.

Above all, employees must feel confident reporting concerns and withdrawing from situations they consider unsafe.

Knowing where a vehicle is located is useful. Knowing that the person operating it can obtain help when needed is what really matters.●

Denbighshire Invests in Fleet Renewal to Support Essential Services



Denbighshire County Council is continuing to modernise its vehicle fleet, with the introduction of eight new winter maintenance gritters and an electric minibus highlighting its approach to balancing operational requirements, service delivery and decarbonisation.

The council has taken delivery of eight new Econ Engineering Volvo gritters, replacing vehicles that have been in service for around a decade. The investment forms part of preparations for winter, ensuring the council can maintain essential highway services during periods of snow and ice.

The new gritters feature modern in-cab control systems, allowing drivers to manage the application of de-icing materials more efficiently. Fleet Services has provided driver familiarisation training, with operational trials scheduled for 15 and 16 October across the north and south of the county.

Denbighshire maintains a highway network extending across 1,418km, including major strategic routes and rural roads serving isolated communities. Its winter maintenance operation comprises nine priority gritting routes, covering approximately 950km of road and treating 605km of the network.

Councillor James Elson, Lead Member for Environment and Transport, said:

"This investment to replace our ageing gritting fleet is important to maintain our resilience to provide support to keep our region's roads open for essential traffic and residents during periods of adverse winter weather."

He added that the modern vehicles would also provide a safer working environment for drivers operating long hours, often overnight in challenging conditions.

Electrification where operationally appropriate

Alongside investment in specialist vehicles, the council is continuing to introduce zero-emission vehicles where they can meet operational needs.

Its latest addition is an electric Toyota Proace Verso nine-seat minibus, supplied by Fleet Services to the Oak Tree Centre in Rhyl.

The vehicle will support the centre's Little Acorns childcare service, Play Ranger service and family information support activities, providing transport for services delivered to children and families across Rhyl and the surrounding area.

Offering a driving range of more than 200 miles, the minibus becomes the fifth electric vehicle operated by the centre. Its introduction has received funding support from the Welsh Government Energy Service.

Following the council's declaration of a climate and nature emergency in 2019, Fleet Services has progressively introduced zero-emission vehicles, which now account for more than 20% of its fleet.

The transition is supported by driver training covering safe and efficient charging, regenerative braking and selecting appropriate driving modes according to operating conditions and vehicle payload.

Councillor Elson said the new minibus would help the centre maintain its services while reducing long-term mileage and maintenance costs.

Together, the two investments demonstrate the importance of matching vehicle technology to operational requirements. While electrification is being adopted for suitable passenger transport and service vehicles, modern specialist equipment remains essential to maintaining the county's highway network and ensuring services can continue throughout the year.●



Fraikin Extends **Fleet Partnership** With **Loreburn Housing Association**



Fraikin has strengthened its relationship with Loreburn Housing Association with the supply of an additional 3.5-tonne Maxus Deliver 9 van, continuing a fleet partnership that supports essential repairs and maintenance services across Dumfries and Galloway.

The latest vehicle has been supplied on a full-service contract hire agreement and joins Loreburn's 28-strong van fleet, supplied exclusively by Fraikin. Established in 2024, the partnership has focused on maintaining vehicle reliability, improving driver safety and providing the operational support required to keep the housing association's maintenance teams on the road.

Loreburn Housing Association manages more than 2,500 homes across Dumfries and Galloway, with its repairs and maintenance teams undertaking planned maintenance, responding to repair requests and supporting tenants.

Operating across a geographically diverse area, the organisation requires dependable vehicles that can accommodate the tools, equipment and materials needed by its maintenance teams.

Using Telematics To Improve Driver Safety

Alongside vehicle provision and maintenance support, Fraikin has worked with Loreburn to introduce a more structured approach to monitoring driver behaviour and improving road safety.

Through Fraikin's MYSMARTFLEET telematics platform, the organisations have developed a driver improvement programme that uses vehicle data to identify areas where additional guidance or support may be beneficial.

Over the past two years, the programme has focused on monitoring driving behaviours such as speeding, harsh braking and acceleration, helping Loreburn identify trends and encourage safer, more consistent driving standards.

Rather than relying solely on individual incidents, ongoing performance data allows the housing association to take a proactive approach to driver management, recognising good performance while addressing behaviours that could increase risk or contribute to unnecessary vehicle wear.

The initiative has delivered measurable improvements, with Loreburn achieving the highest overall safety performance among customers using Fraikin's MYSMARTFLEET platform.

Individual driver performance has also been recognised. One Loreburn driver achieved the highest safety score among 2,500 drivers monitored through the platform who cover up to 25,000 miles annually, earning Fraikin's Driver of the Year award.

Keeping Maintenance Teams On The Road

Under the full-service contract hire agreement, Fraikin manages vehicle maintenance and support requirements, including routine servicing, repairs, safety inspections, MOT testing, tyre management and roadside assistance.

The arrangement reduces the administrative burden associated with managing individual maintenance activities and provides Loreburn with a single fleet partner responsible for coordinating vehicle support.

Fraikin's online fleet maintenance portal provides access to information relating to vehicle maintenance and servicing requirements, helping the housing association maintain oversight of its fleet.

For an organisation whose vehicles are used daily to deliver services to tenants, this approach helps ensure maintenance requirements can be planned effectively, reducing the potential for avoidable disruption.

It also supports greater visibility of operating costs, enabling Loreburn to manage its vehicle resources within a structured contract hire arrangement rather than dealing with individual maintenance expenses as they arise.

Billy Coupland, Head of Repairs & Maintenance at Loreburn Housing Association, said:

"Fraikin has taken the time to get to grips with how our services operate and the pressures our teams face every day. Reliability, uptime, and driver safety are critical for us, and the consistency we have seen across the fleet since working with Fraikin has helped us maintain high service levels for our tenants."

Supportingl Housing Services

The addition of the latest Maxus Deliver 9 reflects the continuing relationship between the two organisations and the importance of reliable transport to Loreburn's operations.

With its fleet supporting services across more than 2,500 homes, Loreburn's focus remains on maintaining vehicle availability and safe working practices while ensuring its maintenance teams can respond to tenants throughout Dumfries and Galloway.●



Calisen's Briony Morgan-Wilcox and David Carlisle from Genie Insights with the latest electric van to be fitted with solar panel technology.

Calisen Introduces Solar Technology to Electric Van Fleet to Reduce Downtime

Calisen, the UK's largest smart meter provider to around 40% of British homes, has fitted Genie Insights' solar battery maintenance solution across its electric van fleet. Calisen runs a fleet of around 350 vans, including 2.8-tonne models from Stellantis and Toyota, which support a nationwide field force of approximately 1,100 engineers and technicians. One-third of the fleet is now fully electric. The installation of this new technology is expected to reduce avoidable down time by up to 50%.

There are a number of elements to electric vans which can draw on batteries, compromising vehicle reliability. Telematic units fitted to vans, for example, draw power even when vehicles are parked up, and over extended periods of inactivity such as public holidays, result in avoidable breakdowns and vehicle downtime.

Manufacturers are also shrinking the size of 12V batteries in electric vans just as auxiliary power demands are increasing. This is creating a widening reliability gap where lower reserve capacity must manage heavier, continuous electrical loads. Calisen has seen this impact van reliability and addressed these issues by rolling out a battery maintenance solution - supplied by Genie Insights and powered by MIPV solar technology.

The 50W solar panels continuously top up the vehicle's 12V battery throughout the day, helping to prevent battery failures, maintain battery health and ensure vehicles remain operational at all times. Forty vehicles have already had the technology retrofitted and it is also being incorporated into Calisen's newly procured vehicles which are converted to a bespoke specification before deployment into service.

Briony Morgan-Wilcox, Calisen's fleet sustainability and efficiency manager, said: *"Our engineers and technicians depend on their vehicles every day to deliver essential services to customers across the UK. We had to find a swift resolution to our battery problems and were introduced to Genie through a major fleet operator which had already rolled out solar panel technology to resolve a similar problem.*

"The solar panels are already improving vehicle reliability, reducing avoidable downtime and ensuring our field staff can stay productive. The solar technology delivers a passive but always-on solution to a real operational headache while also supporting our wider sustainability objectives."

The majority of Calisen's electric vans travel around 100 miles each day, making them well suited to electrification. Drivers primarily charge their vehicles at home or through the public charging network, while the addition of solar charging provides an extra layer of resilience to the 12V battery to help maintain its charge between journeys.

The solar rollout forms part of Calisen's broader sustainability strategy as it continues to expand its support for the UK's energy transition whilst working towards decarbonising its fleet.

David Carlisle, sales manager at Genie Insights said: *"We have worked in partnership with Calisen to help resolve their battery problems and we look forward to increasing their fleet utilisation. Battery failure has become a common challenge for eLCVs, and we believe our solar power proposition is a reliable and cost-effective solution to take away downtime challenges and optimise the long-term life of vehicle batteries."*●

HVO – A **Practical Route** to **Lower-Carbon Waste** Collection?

As local authorities work towards decarbonising their fleets, the transition to electric refuse collection vehicles is proving more complex than replacing conventional diesel models. With operational demands, infrastructure limitations and vehicle costs influencing decisions, some councils are turning to Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) as an alternative. Recent developments in West Oxfordshire, Luton and South Hams illustrate how the fuel is being incorporated into fleet replacement and emissions reduction strategies.

Waste collection vehicles are among the most demanding assets operated by local authorities. Frequent stopping and starting, hydraulic lifting equipment, heavy payloads and extended collection rounds place considerable demands on both vehicles and their fuel systems. Reliability is essential, with breakdowns potentially disrupting services and creating additional costs through repairs and vehicle hire.

While electric refuse collection vehicles are becoming more widely available, their suitability varies according to route length, terrain, payload and access to charging infrastructure. For councils operating across extensive rural areas or managing ageing fleets, the transition requires careful planning.

HVO is emerging as one option for reducing lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions from existing diesel vehicles and new replacements while longer-term electrification plans develop.

West Oxfordshire – Balancing Replacement and Electrification

West Oxfordshire District Council has approved a £3.5 million investment to replace 16 ageing diesel waste collection vehicles, combining electric models with HVO-compatible replacements.

Fourteen vehicles will be capable of operating on either conventional diesel or HVO, while two will be fully electric.

The investment follows increasing maintenance costs and operational pressures associated with vehicles approaching or exceeding their planned working lives. More frequent breakdowns and greater reliance on hired vehicles have reinforced the need for a structured replacement programme.



West Oxfordshire District Council is investing £3.5 million in 16 replacement waste collection vehicles, including 14 HVO-compatible models and two fully electric vehicles.

The council currently achieves a 99.95% successful waste collection rate, making fleet availability a key consideration in its procurement decisions.

Working with its service delivery partner, Ubico, the council has trialled larger electric refuse collection vehicles.

Although the trials demonstrated the potential of electrification, challenges were identified around operating range, charging reliability and resilience, particularly across rural collection routes.

Electric technology is already being introduced elsewhere in the council's fleet. Electric vans support waste, street cleansing and grounds maintenance operations, while four additional electric food waste collection vehicles are scheduled for delivery towards the end of 2026.

For larger vehicles where electrification is not yet considered practical, the council intends to use certified HVO, with potential lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions savings of up to 83% compared with fossil diesel.

The approach allows West Oxfordshire to continue reducing emissions while maintaining flexibility over future vehicle and fuel choices.

Luton – Combining HVO With Operational Improvements

While West Oxfordshire is using HVO as part of a mixed replacement programme, Luton Council has introduced ten new HVO-powered refuse collection vehicles, combining lower-carbon fuel with improvements in safety, efficiency and manoeuvrability.

The vehicles form part of an ongoing capital replacement programme designed to reduce unplanned downtime and maintain collection services across the borough.

Each vehicle is equipped with 360-degree camera coverage, CCTV and reversing radar capable of detecting people up to seven metres behind the vehicle.

These systems are particularly relevant to refuse collection operations, where vehicles frequently manoeuvre through residential streets and work close

Ten new HVO-powered refuse collection vehicles are being introduced by **Luton Council**, incorporating improved safety systems and fuel-saving technology.



Pictured: Councillor Steve Stephens, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services at Luton Council

to pedestrians, cyclists and other vulnerable road users.

The new vehicles are also slightly shorter and narrower than their predecessors, improving access along restricted roads without compromising their operational role.

Alongside HVO compatibility, an ECO pump system allows bin lifting to take place while the engine is idling, rather than requiring higher engine speeds. This can help reduce fuel consumption, emissions and noise during collection rounds.

The investment demonstrates that improving environmental performance need not be considered separately from vehicle safety, productivity and whole-life operating costs.

Several of Luton's new vehicles are already operational, with the remainder being introduced across the council's main collection rounds. Further replacements are planned as older vehicles reach the end of their working lives.

South Hams – Testing HVO Before Wider Adoption

South Hams District Council is taking a different approach, assessing the performance of HVO in its existing waste fleet before committing to wider adoption.

A trial involving four refuse collection vehicles reported lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions reductions of between 79% and 89% compared with conventional diesel.

The council also reported no compatibility or reliability issues, with the vehicles operating without modifications.

Based on fuel consumption during 2025/26, South Hams estimates that switching its entire waste fleet to HVO could reduce annual greenhouse gas emissions by approximately 1,210 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent.

This would represent an estimated 81% reduction in waste fleet emissions and a 61% reduction in the council's overall reported emissions.

The findings have prompted consideration of a further six-month trial at the council's Ivybridge and Torr Quarry depots, allowing additional assessment of fuel costs, operational performance and sustainability.

South Hams has already replaced 15 diesel vans with electric alternatives, but recognises that larger refuse vehicles present different challenges.

Its approach reflects the importance of gathering operational evidence before making significant changes to fleet fuel strategies, particularly where existing vehicles remain serviceable.

Understanding the Benefits and Limitations of HVO

HVO is a renewable diesel fuel produced from feedstocks such as waste oils and fats. Unlike conventional biodiesel, it is chemically similar to fossil diesel and can be used in many compatible diesel engines without modification, subject to manufacturer approval.

This makes it attractive to fleet operators seeking to reduce emissions without immediately replacing vehicles or investing in extensive new infrastructure.

However, the environmental benefits depend heavily on how the fuel is produced and the materials used.

The substantial greenhouse gas reductions reported by councils relate to lifecycle emissions, which account for fuel production and supply as well as combustion. They should not be confused with equivalent reductions in tailpipe carbon dioxide emissions.

HVO remains a combustion fuel and does not eliminate exhaust emissions, including nitrogen oxides and particulates.

Availability, price and the sustainability of feedstocks are also important considerations. HVO generally carries a premium over conventional diesel, meaning operators must assess the additional fuel expenditure against potential emissions savings.

Certification and traceability are particularly important. West Oxfordshire, for example, intends to require suppliers to provide evidence of feedstock origins, emissions performance and compliance with recognised sustainability standards.

A Role Alongside Electrification

The experiences of West Oxfordshire, Luton and South Hams demonstrate that there is no single approach to reducing emissions from waste collection fleets.

West Oxfordshire is combining electric vehicles with HVO-compatible replacements, Luton is incorporating renewable fuel into a wider vehicle modernisation programme, and South Hams is gathering evidence before deciding whether to expand its use.

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South Hams District Council is considering wider HVO adoption following a four-vehicle trial that reported lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions savings of between 79% and 89%.



In each case, operational requirements remain central to decision-making.

Electric vehicles offer the opportunity to eliminate tailpipe emissions and may provide lower running costs where charging arrangements and duty cycles are suitable. However, the capital investment, infrastructure requirements and operational limitations of larger specialist vehicles continue to influence the pace of adoption.

HVO provides an alternative for compatible diesel vehicles, potentially allowing councils to achieve substantial lifecycle greenhouse gas savings while retaining existing operational capabilities.

For fleet managers, the decision is ultimately about matching the available technology to the service being delivered, assessing whole-life costs and ensuring that emissions reductions do not come at the expense of reliability.

As refuse collection fleets continue to evolve, HVO may have an important transitional role, particularly where electrification is not yet operationally or financially viable.●



HVO – Key Considerations for Fleet Operators

- **Vehicle Compatibility**: HVO can be used in many existing diesel engines without modification, provided manufacturer approval is confirmed.
- **Lifecycle Emissions**: Certified waste-derived HVO can deliver substantial lifecycle greenhouse gas savings compared with fossil diesel. Actual reductions depend on feedstock and production methods.
- **Tailpipe Emissions**: HVO is still a combustion fuel and does not eliminate tailpipe CO_2, nitrogen oxides or particulate emissions.
- **Fuel Costs**: HVO generally costs more than conventional diesel, making whole-life operating costs an important consideration.
- **Sustainability**: Independently verified feedstock origins and recognised certification are essential when assessing environmental claims.
- **Operational Flexibility**: HVO may provide a practical interim option for specialist vehicles where electrification is not yet suitable.●



Fleet Operators Gain **New Fuel Supply** Option

Fuel specialist Craggs Energy has been awarded a position on ESPO's new 301_26 Liquid Fuels framework, giving local authorities, emergency services and other public sector fleets across England, Wales and Scotland a new compliant route to source HVO, diesel and other liquid fuels for their vehicles.

The place on the framework, which runs through to 17 August 2028, comes as fleet managers across the public sector re-establish call-off arrangements following the expiry of the previous framework. This is particularly relevant for fleet and transport managers reviewing their supplier arrangements at a key point in the year, as they look ahead to winter operations and next year's fuel and carbon budgets.

Unlike earlier single-supplier-per-region models, 301_26 appoints multiple suppliers, allowing fleet managers to make decisions on criteria that matter to them – reliability, response time and service - rather than on price alone. The framework provides for up to approximately 300 million litres over its two-year term.

Employee-owned fuel distributor Craggs Energy will supply HVO, kerosene, red and white diesel, and Flame, covering England, Wales and Scotland – excluding the Highlands and Northern Ireland – through its established network of trusted distribution partners.

With a 98.5% on-time delivery performance record, Craggs Energy brings years of public sector supply experience, ranging from local authorities such as Exeter City Council to NHS organisations, including Liverpool Women's Hospital NHS Trust and NHS Property Services Ltd.

HVO can be used as a drop in alternative to white diesel, meaning organisations can change to a greener alternative without making significant changes to existing vehicles, machinery, generators or storage infrastructure.

As an employee-owned business, Craggs Energy's staff have a personal stake in the company, giving peace of mind to buyers that those responsible for taking orders, planning delivery routes and handling out-of-hours calls are focused on delivering the very best service under the framework.

The employee-owned structure also has a straightforward commercial relevance for public sector buyers, as employee ownership keeps profits and decision-making in the business rather than with external shareholders. This gives buyers a documented, verifiable answer when scoring social value under the Procurement Act 2023.

Fleet operators across the public sector can access Craggs Energy through the ESPO framework 301_26 without running their own tender process.

Fleet management teams in the public sector are being asked to do three things at once — keep sites running without interruption, take carbon out of their operations, and demonstrate value and social value on every pound they spend. Fuel supply touches all three.

As a verified supplier under the 301_26 Liquid Fuels framework, fleet operators can use us compliantly and quickly, without running their own tender. But what we pride ourselves on most is our outstanding service levels and track record of delivering when it matters most, responding quickly, competitively and effectively when our clients need us. This is reflected in our company mantra: 'What matters to you matters to us'.

Lisa Bennett, CEO of Craggs Energy.●

For more information visit: **www.craggsenergy.co.uk** or **www.espo.org/liquid-fuels-26.html**

Octopus Fleet Launches **FleetBoost** to Cut **Public EV Charging Costs**

Octopus Fleet has launched FleetBoost, offering businesses discounts of up to 30% on public EV charging, with potential savings of up to £730 per vehicle annually.

Available through the Octopus Fleet platform, the scheme brings together three major charge point operators – MFG EV Power, IONITY and Be.EV – providing access to thousands of public chargers across the UK.

According to Octopus, 99% of areas covered by FleetBoost are within 14 miles of an eligible charger, with 95% within nine miles.

The wider Octopus Fleet platform also provides automated home charging reimbursement, public charging payments and a Visa-backed Fleet Card for mixed fleets.



Matt Davies, Founder of Octopus Fleet, said: *"By bringing together some of the UK's biggest charging brands, we can help accelerate the transition to commercial EVs and slash the cost of public charging for businesses."* ●

Fuuse and **Drax Partner** to **Support bp pulse Fleet Charging Migration**

EV charge point management platform, Fuuse, and energy and EV infrastructure leader, Drax Electric Vehicles, part of energy provider Drax Group, today announced a major partnership. Together, they will support the transition of almost 1,000 former bp pulse fleet 'depot' charging customers and their chargers. These customers represent a combined charging socket count of more than 14,000.

Fuuse will lead what is expected to be one of the largest charging infrastructure migrations the UK EV sector has seen. This will enable fleets to retain and optimise their existing charging estate without costly rip-and-replace programmes.

The appointment follows more than a year of extensive collaboration, hardware testing and platform development between bp's EV charging business and Fuuse, ensuring customers can transition smoothly while maintaining operational continuity across their charging infrastructure.

Through a strategic partnership with Drax, customers will also benefit from a nationwide, enterprise-grade service and maintenance offering. This will include the continuation of existing hardware warranty support and protecting previous infrastructure investment.

James Chapman, Strategic Sales Director at Fuuse said: *"We're excited to welcome bp pulse fleet 'depot' charging customers onto the Fuuse platform. Being selected as the exclusive migration partner is a huge endorsement of both our platform and our people.*

"By building on our existing partnership with Drax Electric Vehicles, we're proud to be able to provide best-in-class hardware maintenance support, while honouring existing hardware warranties. This is about more than just software. It's about protecting customer investment, maintaining operational continuity and making what could feel like a disruptive change, incredibly straightforward."

Adam Hall, Energy Services Director at Drax Electric Vehicles said: *"Ensuring former bp pulse fleet 'depot' charging customers can move forward with confidence is our priority. With nationwide field service capability and continuity of existing hardware warranty support, we can help ensure charging infrastructure remains maintained, supported and fully operational. That means less disruption, reduced downtime and greater confidence for fleets relying on their vehicles every day."*

Customers affected by the bp pulse transition can register their migration via the link provided in the notification email from bp pulse.

Following registration, Fuuse's onboarding team will validate charging infrastructure requirements, confirm service arrangements and guide customers through the migration process.●

Smartwatch Notifications Raise **New Driver Safety Concerns**

Fleet operators are being urged to review their driver distraction policies as growing use of smartwatches and wearable technology creates another potential safety risk for employees driving on business.

While most organisations have established rules governing mobile phone use behind the wheel, smartwatches connected to company smartphones, email accounts and workplace messaging platforms may fall outside existing policies.

Fleet management specialist Fleet Operations warns that notifications delivered directly to a driver's wrist can divert attention from the road, even when their mobile phone remains untouched.

Emails, messages, meeting reminders and other alerts can trigger vibrations or illuminate a smartwatch display, encouraging drivers to glance at their wrist while driving.

Tony Greenidge, Head of Driver Risk Management at Fleet Operations, believes employers need to recognise wearable technology as part of their wider approach to occupational road safety.

"Most organisations have clear policies covering mobile phone use behind the wheel, but smartwatches can easily fall outside these controls," **he said.**

"When a smartwatch is connected to work email, messaging platforms or a company phone, it can effectively bring workplace notifications directly into the vehicle.

"A vibrating watch displaying a message, email or other alert may seem less intrusive than a mobile phone, but it can still divert a driver's attention at a critical moment."

Fleet Operations recommends that employers review their driving-for-work policies to ensure wearable devices are specifically addressed, rather than assuming existing mobile phone restrictions provide sufficient protection.

This could include disabling smartwatch notifications while driving, providing clear guidance on acceptable use and ensuring employees understand that distraction is not limited to physically handling a mobile phone.

The issue is particularly relevant to mobile workforces, where employees may receive regular job updates, appointment changes and operational messages throughout the working day.

Although these systems support communication and productivity, employers should consider whether notifications need to reach drivers while vehicles are moving.

"Workplace technology is evolving quickly, so employers need to make sure their driving-for-work policies keep pace," **Greenidge added.**

"Driver distraction is not simply about whether someone is holding a phone. Anything that takes a driver's eyes, hands or concentration away from the task of driving can increase risk."

Department for Transport figures cited by Fleet Operations indicate that mobile device use was recorded as a contributory factor in 3.2% of fatal collisions in Great Britain in 2025.

While the figures do not specifically identify smartwatch use, they underline the wider risks associated with technology-related driver distraction.

For fleet operators, the message is to ensure that policies, driver training and workplace communication practices reflect how employees use connected devices.

As wearable technology becomes more integrated with business systems, managing driver distraction increasingly means looking beyond the mobile phone itself.●



Find out more, visit: **www.fleetoperations.co.uk**









Volkswagen Updates **Caddy Range** with **Improved Technology** and **Driver Assistance**

Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles has introduced an updated Caddy Cargo and Caddy People range, featuring a refreshed interior, improved connectivity and additional driver assistance technology.

The latest updates focus on improving everyday usability, with changes to the cabin, infotainment system and exterior styling. The Caddy remains an important model within Volkswagen's commercial vehicle range, with more than 110,000 vehicles delivered globally during 2025.

Improved Interior and Connectivity

One of the most significant changes is the introduction of a 12.9-inch infotainment touchscreen, providing a larger interface for accessing vehicle functions and connectivity features.

Volkswagen's Digital Cockpit Pro is now included as standard, replacing conventional instruments with a configurable digital display.

Smartphone charging has also been improved, with 25W wireless charging fitted across the range. Higher-output USB-C connections are provided in the front, alongside an additional USB-C port integrated into the dashboard.

Other interior changes include an illuminated touch-sensitive temperature control, revised trim finishes and new seat upholstery designs.

Additional Driver Assistance Features

The updated Caddy benefits from enhancements to Volkswagen's Travel Assist system, including assisted lane-changing functionality and revised Emergency Assist operations.

These systems are designed to support drivers during longer journeys and in busy traffic conditions, helping to reduce workload while maintaining driver responsibility for vehicle control.

Exterior Styling Updates

Exterior revisions are relatively modest, with a redesigned front bumper retaining the Caddy's familiar appearance.

Four additional paint colours have been introduced: Reed Green Metallic, Grenadilla Black Metallic, Sunset Red Metallic and Grey Brown Metallic, increasing the available range to 11 finishes.

Wheel options include 16-inch steel wheels as standard on Commerce and Commerce Plus models, with optional 16-inch Lisboa alloy wheels. Higher-specification Commerce Pro versions receive 17-inch Amsterdam alloy wheels as standard.

For fleet operators, the updated Caddy Cargo combines the established practicality of Volkswagen's compact van with improvements to driver comfort, connectivity and assistance technology, particularly relevant to vehicles used for maintenance, service and delivery operations.●

Find out more, visit: **www.volkswagen-vans.co.uk**

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Defender Unveils **New Wolf Series II** for **Specialist Military Operations**



JLR has unveiled three variants of its new Defender Wolf Series II, marking the return of the Defender name to military vehicle development and introducing a potential replacement for the British Armed Forces' ageing Land Rover fleet.

Developed by JLR's newly established Defender Defence Division, the Wolf Series II was presented at the British Army's DVD 2026 defence exhibition, held at Millbrook Proving Ground in Bedfordshire in September.

The new vehicles have been developed to meet the requirements of the Ministry of Defence's Light Mobility Vehicle programme, which aims to replace existing military vehicles with a new generation of versatile, highly capable platforms.

JLR is competing for the UK contract while also offering the Wolf Series II to NATO defence organisations.

Three variants were unveiled at the event: a Tactical Mobility Vehicle (TMV), Mono-Tactical Mobility Vehicle (M-TMV) and Utility Vehicle (UV). The different configurations demonstrate the adaptability of the Defender platform for personnel transport, equipment movement and specialist operational duties.

British Engineering and Manufacturing

Designed and engineered in Britain, the Defender Wolf Series II uses engines manufactured at JLR's Wolverhampton facility, together with technologies developed through the company's UK engineering operations.

The new vehicle builds on the Defender's D7x architecture, using monocoque construction rather than the traditional ladder-frame chassis employed by earlier military Land Rovers.

According to JLR, the structure provides greater rigidity and increased payload capability compared with previous ladder-frame designs, while allowing the platform to be adapted for different military requirements.

The company reports that the Defender platform underwent more than 62,000 engineering sign-off tests during development, with its chassis and body architecture designed to withstand demanding operating conditions.

Testing has included extreme temperatures, challenging terrain and high-altitude environments, reflecting the varied conditions in which military vehicles may be required to operate.

Supporting Specialist Fleet Operations

Although developed primarily for defence applications, the Wolf Series II builds on the existing Defender Expert programme, which supports specialist vehicle requirements for emergency services and other organisations.

Defender vehicles are already used internationally in applications including police, border security, fire and rescue operations.

For organisations operating vehicles in demanding environments, the development of the Wolf Series II demonstrates how an established vehicle architecture can be adapted to meet more specialised operational requirements.

Off-road performance, durability, payload capability and vehicle adaptability are all important considerations for fleets supporting emergency response, infrastructure maintenance and operations in remote locations.

JLR has also emphasised the importance of reducing unnecessary complexity in the military specification, with its engineering teams adapting the vehicle to meet operational requirements.

Continuing a Long Military Heritage

The Wolf Series II follows a long history of Land Rover vehicles serving the British Armed Forces, dating back more than 70 years.

The original Defender Wolf became a familiar part of military operations, providing personnel and equipment transport across a wide range of environments.

The new generation represents a significant departure from that earlier design, combining the current Defender's architecture and electronic systems with configurations developed specifically for military use.

Patrick McGillycuddy, Defender Managing Director, described the Wolf Series II as a modern successor to the vehicles that have supported British military operations for decades.

With the Ministry of Defence evaluating future light mobility requirements, JLR is seeking to demonstrate that British engineering expertise can continue to play an important role in the development of specialist military vehicles.

No procurement award has yet been announced, but the introduction of the Wolf Series II represents a significant new direction for Defender and JLR's specialist vehicle operations.●

Find out more, visit: **www.jlr.com/defender-for-light-logistics-and-operational-fleets**

Renault Updates **Trafic** With **Improved Safety** and **Conversion Technology**

Renault has introduced a series of upgrades to its diesel-powered Trafic range, bringing improvements to vehicle handling, braking, driver safety and onboard technology, alongside new functionality designed for specialist vehicle conversions.

The updated models feature electric power steering, developed to reduce steering effort during urban driving and manoeuvring, together with an upgraded braking system incorporating larger front discs and twin-piston callipers.

Safety improvements include an advanced driver attention monitoring camera, while reversing cameras are now standard across the range.

Inside, the Trafic Van gains a 10-inch multimedia touchscreen with improved response times, wireless smartphone connectivity and additional USB-C charging ports. LED lighting is also standard in the cabin and load area, while more durable upholstery has been introduced to withstand everyday commercial use.

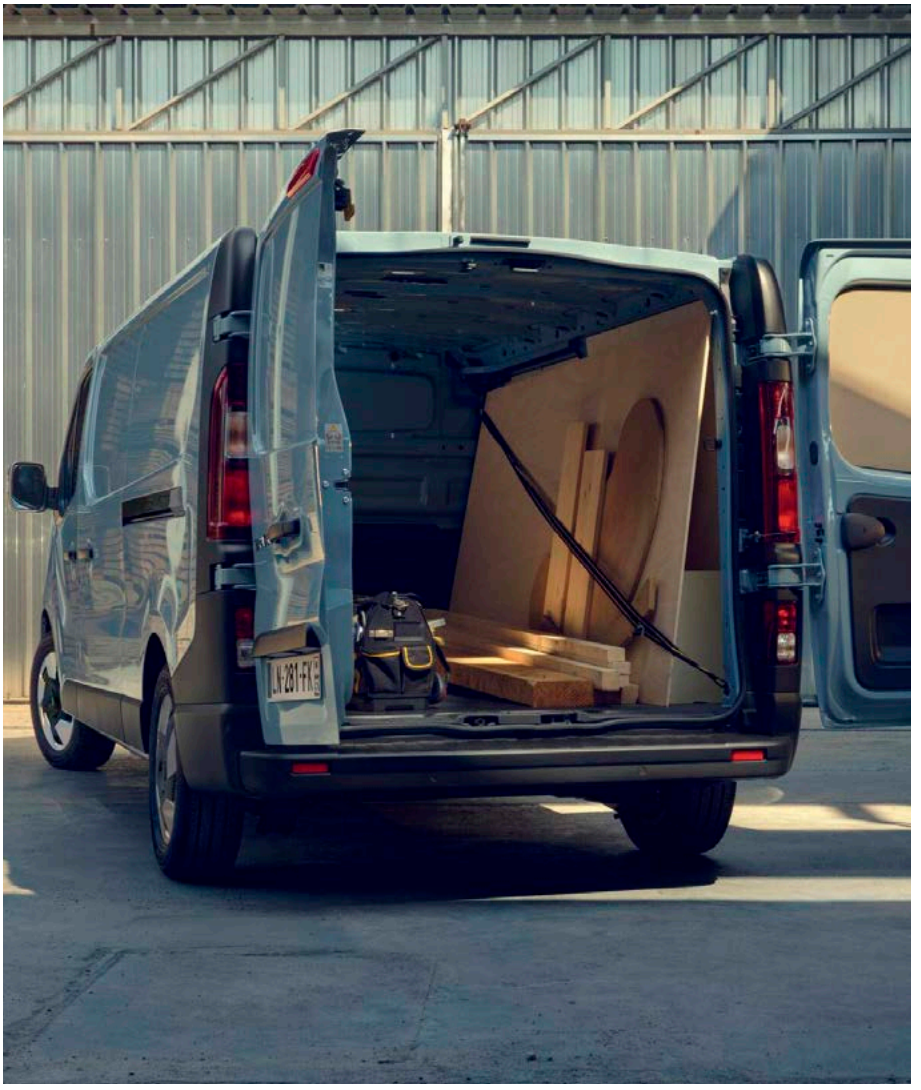
Of particular interest to specialist fleet operators is Renault's new 'convertor companion' application, integrated into the vehicle's multimedia system.

The technology allows equipment installed during a vehicle conversion to be controlled through the central touchscreen, potentially replacing additional dashboard switches. Applications include operating lighting in mobile workshops, controlling refrigeration systems and managing equipment fitted to emergency service vehicles.

Renault continues to offer the Trafic in two body lengths, with manual and nine-speed automatic transmission options, supported by its network of certified conversion partners.

The upgrades place particular emphasis on driver usability, vehicle safety and the integration of specialist equipment, all important considerations for fleets operating vehicles throughout extended working lives.●





Find out more, visit: **www.renault.co.uk/van-range.html**

Ford Expands **Electric Transit City Range** with **New Chassis Cab** and **Specialist Conversions**





Ford has expanded its new all-electric Transit City range with the introduction of a chassis cab variant, designed to accommodate specialist conversions for urban delivery, maintenance and service operations.

Unveiled at IAA Transportation 2026 in Hannover, the new chassis cab joins the L1H1 and L2H2 panel vans, extending the flexibility of Ford's latest electric commercial vehicle range.

Developed through Ford's partnership with Jiangling Motors Corporation (JMC), the Transit City is designed primarily for urban operations, where predictable daily mileage and access to charging infrastructure can make electric vehicles a practical alternative to diesel.

The vehicle offers a claimed driving range of up to 157 miles, with DC rapid charging capable of replenishing the battery from 10% to 80% in just over 30 minutes. According to Ford, approximately 30 miles of additional range can be added in 10 minutes using a suitable charger.

Specialist Conversions for Different Fleet Applications

The chassis cab has been developed to support a variety of body configurations, with Ford demonstrating box van, refrigerated and dropside conversions alongside a specialist racking installation.

Working through Ford Pro Special Vehicles and its network of approximately 200 approved conversion specialists, operators will be able to specify vehicles for particular operational requirements.

To simplify the conversion process, the chassis incorporates features including optimised chassis rails, standardised mounting points and designated no-drill zones.

A box van conversion developed by Scattolini takes advantage of the electric platform's low floor height to provide easier loading access without requiring a tail lift. Constructed using insulated GRP panels, the body provides 10.4m^3 of load space, with a load length of 3.01 metres, an internal height of 1.8 metres and a maximum payload of 1,120kg.

A dropside version features an aluminium-sided body with a plywood load floor, providing a load area measuring 3.13 metres by 2 metres and a payload capacity of up to 1,300kg. This configuration could suit highways maintenance, grounds maintenance and other operations requiring easy access to materials and equipment.

Refrigerated and Workshop Applications

Ford has also demonstrated a refrigerated concept aimed at temperature-controlled deliveries, including food distribution and pharmaceutical transport.

The conversion uses an electric power take-off system, which is expected to become available to Transit City customers during 2027.



For mobile engineers and utility operators, a separate panel van conversion developed by Sortimo incorporates modular aluminium uprights, adjustable shelving, drawers and storage compartments.

The installation is designed to provide organised storage for tools, components and equipment while making efficient use of the available load space.

The new Transit City range is expected to begin appearing on UK roads before the end of 2026, providing fleet operators with additional electric vehicle options for urban services and specialist applications ●

Find out more, visit: **www.ford.co.uk**



Six-point checklist issued by **AFP** in response to **2026 Budget**

A six-point checklist has been issued by the Association of Fleet Professionals (AFP) in response to the Budget, the first from Andy Burnham's government and Chancellor John Healey.

It begins with a recommendation to examine the newly extended benefit-in-kind (BIK) tables, which now run to 2030-31, and their impact across fleet operations, especially the increased viability of salary sacrifice schemes.

Points two and three are to update 2027–28 financial forecasts to reflect fuel duty and heavy goods vehicle (HGV) Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) extensions, and to review grey fleet policy in light of higher Approved Mileage Allowance Payment (AMAP), including the possibility of managed fleet alternatives.

Fleets are then advised to refresh their vehicle replacement strategy to align with Euro 7 timelines and manufacturer supply constraints, and to prepare for electric Vehicle Excise Duty (eVED) through mileage capture, telematics integration and driver communication.

Finally, the AFP recommends assessing the total cost of ownership impacts of plug-in hybrid electric vehicles (PHEVs) versus battery electric vehicles (BEVs) under Euro 7.

Dale Eynon, AFP government affairs and policy lead, said: *"This was a mixed Budget for fleets. The certainty offered by the extension to the BIK tables is very much to be welcomed, as is the fact there is only a one percentage point increase to 10% for the 2030-31 tax year.*

Our feeling is that low taxation still plays a key part in enticing drivers into EVs and this remains an attractive rate.

"We are also pleased to see plans are in place to introduce lower cost, lower power charging to make EV operation more affordable, although we are awaiting more details about exactly how this will work."

Beyond this point, Dale said, the good news was limited, with only short-term relief in areas such as the fuel duty freeze, despite the fact that many AFP members faced rising costs.

"Heavy fleets will similarly benefit from extended duty and VED relief, which offers some breathing space but elsewhere, the picture is less encouraging, with little to ease the wider economic pressures that vehicle operators are facing and some potential unintended effects.

For example, increased grey fleet mileage rates could drive more employees to use older, less environmentally friendly cars, something most fleets want to avoid. This situation could strengthen the business case for fleet consolidation and wider EV adoption."

Regulatory certainty was provided through confirmation alongside the Budget of UK adoption of Euro 7 standards, which should help forward ordering and replacement cycles. However, this would weaken future PHEV viability, given expected CO_2 uplifts and eVED costs.

Dale said: *"The Budget document shows no changes to the latest VED proposals, which is disappointing given the AFP has raised several key issues. We hope to see more flexibility emerge but, in the meantime, vehicle operators should prepare. Mileage reporting systems will become increasingly important while telematics capability and odometer verification processes should be examined before the scheme's 2028 arrival."*

AFP Budget 2026 checklist

1. **Examine** the implications of the new 2030-31 benefit-in-kind tables, looking at the impact across fleet operations, especially the increased viability of salary sacrifice schemes.
2. **Update** 2027–28 financial forecasts to reflect fuel duty and HGV VED extensions.
3. **Review** grey fleet policy in light of higher AMAP rates and consider managed fleet alternatives.
4. **Refresh** vehicle replacement strategy to align with Euro 7 timelines and manufacturer supply constraints.
5. **Begin** eVED readiness planning (mileage capture, telematics integration, driver communication).
6. **Assess** total cost of ownership impacts for PHEVs vs BEVs under Euro 7 and future taxation.●



Rising Benefit-in-Kind Rates Send **Wrong Message** to **EV Drivers**

Caroline Sandall-Mansergh, Consultancy and Channel Development Manager at Alphabet (GB), expressed her disappointment on the lack of long-term certainty regarding company car tax.

Speaking after John Healey's first Budget as Chancellor of the Exchequer, **Sandall-Mansergh said:** *"The fleet and leasing industry has long-urged the Government to provide greater certainty for drivers by freezing Benefit-in-Kind rates at 9% for all fully electric vehicles (EVs) through to the 2031/32 tax year.*

"While the 1% increase from 2030/31 may at first appear modest, it's unwelcome and risks creating yet another barrier for drivers who are considering switching to an EV. It comes at a time when the Government is looking to accelerate the transition to greener transport, so this incremental rise sends the wrong message to drivers and businesses alike.

"There's also the added complexity of the eVED set to be introduced from April 2028, which creates further uncertainty surrounding the Government's long-term approach to fleet electrification. We speak with fleet operators and drivers on a daily basis; they need confidence and certainty to plan effectively. A clear direction of travel is essential if the UK is to meet its zero emissions mandate by 2035," **she added.**

The Government's announcement will now see the Benefit-in-Kind rate for EVs increase from 5% to 10% over the next three tax years.●

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