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## Welcome

I hope this magazine finds you well. That phrase, or variations of it, is one that has been used with an increasing regularity over the past few months – understandably – as the global Covid-19 pandemic hit, spread and receded throughout the UK.

The country is by no means out of the woods yet but – at the time of writing – the latest relaxation of lockdown restrictions are being prepared as life attempts to get back to some sense of normality.

There is no doubt that the end of 2020 will be very different from the beginning of the year.

The pandemic has made people realise the importance of taking responsibility, staying safe and thinking about other people to a greater degree than they ever had.

Covid-19 might (hopefully) soon be consigned to history, but the lessons learned from it will (also hopefully) last forever.

The transport sector is one of many industries that has stepped up to the plate and delivered – literally – when it was needed.

Whether it was supplying food to homes or supermarkets, much-needed medical equipment to hospitals or items purchased online to help

make lockdown that bit easier, drivers and fleet operators have gained huge respect from the general public. The essential nature of their businesses is now better understood and part of the attention to detail from many individuals who work in transport and logistics can be attributed to their involvement with FORS.

Meeting the targets set out in the accreditation scheme require commitment, diligence and a greater understanding of the wider world.

As we move forward to the next stage of the pandemic, those qualities that many people display should rightly be applauded and also used as an example for everyone to follow in their daily lives.

Enjoy the issue.

**Matthew Eisenegger,**  
Editor



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Water Street

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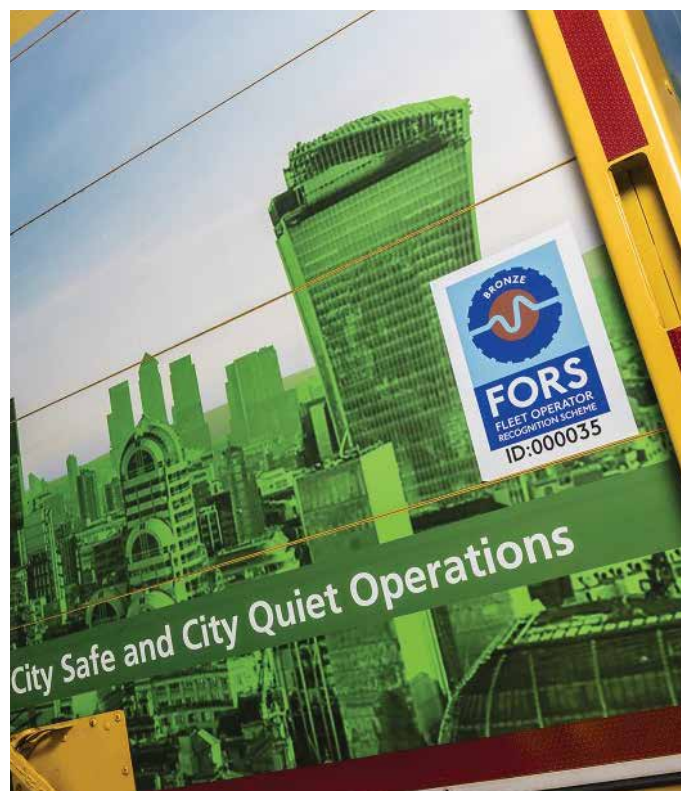


## FORS restarts on-site audits after Covid-19 pause

**F**ORS has resumed Bronze on-site audits for members, following a break in the light of Covid-19 restrictions. Members are able to book Bronze on-site audits, following the easing of government restrictions on travel and work across parts of the UK.

FORS Bronze audits are a fundamental component of FORS.

The Bronze audits verify compliance against the FORS Standard in relation to the management of the fleet operation and its vehicles and drivers. Stringent coronavirus measures have been introduced to ensure the safety of FORS members and auditors during the process. "We know our members are keen to get back to business, but ensuring the



auditees must adhere to so that an on-site audit can go ahead. In order to minimise the risks of transmittal of Covid-19 – and until further notice – FORS has placed obligations on auditors, audit providers and the organisation receiving the audit. This includes FORS operators requesting a Bronze on-site audit having to complete a Covid-19 risk assessment, in line with the government guidance on working safely during Covid-19 in offices.

"Members in England will need to confirm a variety of measures are in place to limit interaction between individuals during the auditing process, for example providing a single and only point of contact for the audit, as well as arranging for all evidence to be provided in the room where the audit is taking place," added Hix.

safety of members and auditors as the organisation adjusts to these 'new normal' working practices is paramount," said FORS Director, John Hix.

To help manage audits, and in line with government guidelines, FORS has produced Covid-19 Bronze on-site auditing rules and requirements, detailing the steps that auditors and

"Our rules and requirements are based on information issued by the UK government, but the FORS document is only applicable to England as there are still regional, national and international restrictions that apply which may continue to prevent FORS audits being undertaken in other parts of the UK," he concluded.

### Benefits of going paperless

Fleet operators are being urged to adopt paperless defect reporting and management in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Mike Kenny, Head of Smart Check, the paperless fleet compliance specialist, said: "The transport industry has proven to be a vital lifeline during these strange times but we are still vulnerable and have been forced to reshape our business processes to a new normal.

"Minimised physical contact is a common theme, including with drivers and mechanics, but how do you hand a defect report to a colleague and maintain social distancing? How can we leave a defect report unattended to be sure it is not contaminated?

"Paperless defect reporting and management has never been so valuable and while many other businesses are planning their recovery, more and more transport firms are switching to a paperless alternative, receiving all the operational benefits but now also lowering risk."



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# SCANIA



## Safety a top priority for Newcastle's new fleet

Newcastle City Council's new fleet of refuse vehicles is equipped with the latest technology to keep pedestrians and cyclists safe. The 30 new trucks, which are used for domestic and commercial waste and recycling collections, have been fitted with RX Lite live camera recording systems, reverse radar and LED warning signs from vehicle safety technology specialist Innovative Safety Systems Ltd (ISS).

Peter Morton, Fleet Manager, Newcastle City Council, said: "The safety of the public is a top priority and this equipment is ensuring that we reduce the risk of any incidents or fatalities."



"The camera systems provide the driver with 360 degree visibility around the vehicle and enable us to track and monitor the vehicles during rounds in real-time. The cameras provide additional reassurance and security for our staff and

the public. If an incident is reported, it is easy to extract the data by the location of the vehicle and investigate any incidents or complaints much more quickly."

The RX Lite live camera system from ISS is manufactured using premium grade components to minimise any risk of failure and utilises wide angle HD 720p cameras and an HD in-cab monitor for maximum image clarity. A large number of vehicles are also equipped with the ISS Cyclecar cyclist warning device, which alerts cyclists when the vehicle is turning left via an audio and visual warning. It also has sensors fitted to the vehicle to detect objects travelling down the left-hand side.

## Mates in Mind Covid-19 appeal

FORS Associate Mates in Mind has published a call for donations to its Covid-19 Relief Fund, which will allow the group to continue to respond with vital support programmes. Workplace mental health issues, already a pervasive challenge, have been heavily impacted by the economic fallout of Covid-19 and the fund is designed to help those struggling at this difficult time.

"We are now reaching out to supporters across the industry to build up a reserve so we can do our part to mitigate the human cost of Covid-19 and its aftermath," said Steve Hails, Chair of the Board of Trustees at Mates in Mind.

"During difficult times like now, it is vitally important that we work together to support each other," added James Rudoni, Managing Director of Mates in Mind. "We can support the most vulnerable workers by addressing gaps in workplace mental health provision, including those who are self-employed or running small businesses – some of the those who are hit hardest by this unexpected crisis."

"The importance of mental health awareness cannot be underestimated, especially in the current climate as we all navigate the effects of Covid-19 and the changes it is bringing to each of our lives," said Rudoni.



## FORS Professional manager course update

FORS has announced plans to continue to deliver all of its FORS Professional courses via webinar until 31 December 2021.

The courses have been run in this way since 2 April 2020, in response to the coronavirus pandemic restrictions that were put in place.

To enhance the training experience, FORS is developing a secure 'virtual classroom' platform to enable the delegates and trainer to see each other and interact in a more classroom-like environment. The new platform will also include an embedded assessment, made up of ten multiple-choice questions to ensure the learning objectives have been met.

As is the case with the current platform, participants will be able to attend any FORS Professional webinars using a computer,

laptop, mobile or tablet, although a computer or laptop is strongly recommended. Delegates will also need a microphone and a webcam, as well as headphones in order to interact with the trainer. Affordable external webcams with built-in microphones are available to purchase from leading online retailers and will give excellent user experience.

● To book a place on a FORS Professional course, go to: [www.fors-online.org.uk/cms/training/](http://www.fors-online.org.uk/cms/training/)

## Management guide

The FORS Professional Effective Driver Management guide – an Industry Code of Practice (ICOP) – contains advice and practical guidance to help drivers manage their mental health. It is intentionally generic to offer guidance to a wide range of organisations and includes some 'top tips' for managing not only drivers, but also non-driving staff within an organisation.

Public Health England has also published online guidance setting out principles to follow to help people to manage their mental health during this difficult time. Visit the FORS website at [www.fors-online.org.uk](http://www.fors-online.org.uk)

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## Introduction of FORS Standard version 6 postponed

Implementation of the revised version of the FORS Standard, version 6, has been postponed by at least one year, to January 2022.

This break in the usual two-year cycle of updates to the FORS Standard is to support FORS operators who have been affected by the coronavirus outbreak and who will be dealing with the fallout from the pandemic over the coming months.

The current version of the FORS Standard will therefore remain in place until at least January 2022.

However, work has been ongoing to include immersive interactive learning as an option to meet the Silver work-related road risk (WRRR) professional development requirement S5.

This new option, which was published with the release of FORS Standard version 5.1, will be valid from 1 July 2020.

Publication of version 6 of the FORS Standard will be in October 2021 at the earliest, with further reviews of the postponement taking place as the coronavirus situation evolves.



## DVSA reveals that 88.5% of almost 11,000 LCVs stopped at the roadside annually are overloaded

With plans to pull over more LCVs on the roadside and potentially to enforce HGV-like legislation on the LCV market, it's about time you checked your van's laden weights, especially the individual axle weights, as SvTech has discovered many more vans have overloaded rear axles than previously thought. Any overload could invalidate your insurance, and if severe enough, could affect your braking and handling.

SvTech is seeing an increasing amount of van uprates at the moment, especially under 3500kg, where we are uprating from 2800kg to 3000/3200kg and from 3200kg up to 3500kg. This additional 300kg of payload is proving vital for many van owners, as it is very easily to overload these vehicles.

Whilst we uprate 3500kg vans by up to 500kg, there are some issues to take into consideration when going above 3500kg. A van over 3500kg needs a speed limiter fitted and, if carrying goods commercially, the van will need a tachograph to be fitted.

In addition, it means that the van can only be driven by someone who either passed their test before 1997 or by someone with a C1 entitlement on their driving licence.

These factors often make the uprate over 3500kg unviable or impractical for some fleet operators, however if the van is being regularly overloaded, SvTech would recommend uprating. We offer fleet discounts and can advise on the next steps. Please contact us to discuss your fleet needs.

"SvTech can help with uprating your LCV to give you more payload, keeping you safe and legal. Most makes and models are catered for."

## Caution

It's important to remember that if a driver doesn't possess the C1 entitlement, and they overload a 3500kg van, in the event of being stopped, it would also be considered as a licence offence, which can hold strict penalties. It's worth weighing the van in an unladen and fully laden state to ascertain your limits.

Fleet discounts are available for uprates on 5 or more vehicles.

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## Lytx supercharges its video telematics

Lytx has unveiled a next generation technology designed to address distracted driving – enhanced machine vision and artificial intelligence-powered risk detection.

Each day in the UK, a third of all fatal collisions are caused by distracted driving. To help combat this epidemic and alleviate other high-risk behaviours for its clients, Lytx, a FORS Associate and a global provider of video telematics solutions for commercial, public sector and field service fleets, has enhanced its machine vision and artificial intelligence (MV+AI)-powered technology to provide near real-time insight into risky behaviours like using a hand-held device while driving.

Traditional software that merely identifies G-force triggers can only be acted upon once the incident has happened, but this technology acts like a driver's sixth sense, constantly monitoring the road



and the driver, detecting risky driving and triggering short video clips to provide an insight into what's going on inside the vehicle.

Lytx's risk detection technology will be included as part of its Driver Safety Suite and will initially include four MV+AI

triggers – hand-held device, no seatbelt, food or drink, and driver smoking. Fleet managers can couple this with Lytx's Fleet Tracking Service to provide a complete and integrated solution for fleets looking to optimise their vehicle technology with a single vendor.

## Gray & Adams recognised with Queen's Award for Enterprise

Following the Royal visit by His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales in 2017, Gray & Adams Ltd, headquartered in Fraserburgh and one of the UK's premium manufacturing companies, has received further Royal recognition.

The company's outstanding achievement in temperature-controlled vehicle design and manufacture has been recognised with a Queen's Award for Enterprise in Innovation for its double-deck trailer design.

Conceived in 1965, the Queen's Awards for Enterprise are the most prestigious awards in UK business. Previous winners include Dyson, Jaguar Land Rover, and JCB. This year, 220 UK businesses have been recognised by the Queen's

Awards for Enterprise, including 66 for innovation.

Having pioneered temperature-controlled lifting deck trailer technology in the 1990s, Gray & Adams continues to be at the cutting edge of technology, delivering practical commercial solutions for its customers, as well as understanding the impact of its activities on the environment.

James Gray, Joint Managing Director, commented: "In these challenging times, we hope the recognition this prestigious award brings will give a small amount of cheer and encouragement to our employees in the North East of Scotland and across the UK."

"We are massively appreciative of our highly-skilled engineering teams and our manufacturing operatives that allow us to produce our world-class products. We would also like to thank our very loyal customers and partners, without whose assistance and support we would be unable to enjoy such recognition," he added.

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## Fleet Source goes live with studio-based training

As fleet operators welcome the DVSA's decision to suspend classroom courses and embrace distance learning, FORS Associate Fleet Source, the independent Driver CPC training provider, has gone live with a TV-based training solution across its Driver CPC classroom course offering.

Now fully-approved by DVSA, the Fleet Source Live training is 'Livecast' to delegates and includes dynamic, interactive content, designed to ensure delegates' experience, engagement and learning retention is much better than that provided by traditional webinar solutions.

Fleet Source CEO, Nick Caesari, said: "These are unprecedented times for the transport industry, with the challenge of meeting increased



Fleet Source's distance learning gets under way

demand for delivery of vital foods, medicines and hygiene products, while adhering to government restrictions on social distancing, as well as minimising the risk of incidents when making deliveries.

"Our customers have been asking me how they would be able to meet these demands while ensuring that the growing backlog of CPC

training does not impact their business after the crisis and during vital business recovery periods.

"They also worry that webinar-based solutions that are currently being offered do not provide the quality of training and vital engagement of traditional classroom training.

"Anyone who has taken part in traditional webinar-based

learning knows that it can be a painful experience, with attention spans challenged and learning retention limited, even for short courses. Imagine what it would be like for drivers undertaking a traditional webinar for seven hours in a single day."

Fleet Source has created a dedicated TV studio at its Letchworth headquarters.

## Quality and price secure council fleet deal for SFS

Runnymede Borough Council has awarded a five-year contract to maintain its fleet of over 80 vehicles to Specialist Fleet Services Ltd (SFS).

Runnymede is the third council in Surrey to switch to SFS, following the award of a 10-year contract for fleet and maintenance provision at Epsom & Ewell Borough Council in 2017 and a six-year fleet replacement and workshop management contract by Spelthorne Council.

Shaun Barnes, Depot Manager at Runnymede Borough Council, said: "SFS won the tender based on quality and price and we are confident the firm will deliver an excellent standard of service. They come very highly recommended by neighbouring councils."

The fleet comprises a wide range of vehicles and plant, including refuse collection

vehicles (RCVs), minibuses for community transport such as meals on wheels and street cleansing vans. The two full-time engineers who man the council's workshop have been transferred across to SFS. Bob Sweetland, Managing Director, SFS, said: "We are very pleased to work with Runnymede and to be extending our customer base in Surrey. As well as maintaining the vehicle fleet, we will enhance the workshop facilities and keep staff fully trained to ensure the fleet is kept running smoothly to deliver essential council services."

In April this year, the council refreshed its fleet with nine brand new refuse collection vehicles, comprising five 26t and three 23t Dennis Eagle Olympus on Dennis Elite chassis all equipped with Terberg OmniDeka bin lifts.



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# Covid-19: navigating the 2020 coronavirus pandemic

By John Hix,  
FORS Director

The Covid-19 outbreak across the UK in March 2020 and the subsequent restrictions on movement imposed by the UK Government have placed a huge strain on families, businesses and the economy.

Despite the relaxation on some restrictions announced in recent weeks, there is no doubt this remains a volatile time for the economy, with the government furlough scheme due to end in October and fears over subsequent waves of the virus.

The pandemic prompted a sea-change in business operations across the country, with FORS members no exception. At FORS, we adapted our services and requirements, with our priority to support our members as they navigate the numerous unforeseen challenges the global pandemic continues to present.

On 23 March, the start of official 'lockdown' in the UK, FORS Bronze audits were suspended, with refunds given to members who had audits already booked after this date.

Bronze, Silver or Gold downgrades were also halted where accreditation dates were exceeded, allowing members to maintain their existing FORS membership status throughout. It wasn't until 15 June that bookings for Bronze site audits were opened up again, with site audits being undertaken against strict social distancing conditions.

FORS Professional manager training sessions were developed into online webinars in early April. FORS Professional Practitioner workshops, FORS Professional Car and Van Fleet



John Hix, FORS Director

Management Essentials, FORS Professional HGV and PCV Fleet Management Essentials, and FORS Professional Collision Management all moved from classroom-based, to interactive webinars.

These online courses are proving extremely successful, with more than 1,500 places filled on FORS Professional webinars since they began on 2 April. We plan to continue offering FORS Professional manager courses online until at least December 2021.

With much of the UK's workforce working at home, the number of vulnerable road users has also increased. Lockdown means more pedestrians and cyclists using the road throughout the day, and with safety at the very core of FORS, we sought to encourage our driving workforce to ensure their road safety training was front of mind, as road use changed for all.

We urge drivers to refresh their FORS Pedestrian Safe training,

to understand the specific dangers faced by pedestrians and learn how to protect them.

Since it began in January 2020, this eLearning module has been completed by over 12,000 individuals as part of the suite of FORS Professional safety eLearning modules.

Unfortunately, the new FORS Standard version 6, which was due to be published in October 2020, is now postponed.

However, one change has been implemented. From 1 July 2020, training providers and FORS members can now submit Immersive Interactive Training to become FORS approved, to help members meet the HGV and van driver work related road risk (WRRR) requirement at Silver level.

## FORS members going the extra mile to help

Time and time again during these unprecedented times, FORS members have gone above and beyond to help meet the changing supply chain needs the pandemic caused.

Despite many members facing uncertainties about their own futures, many put the needs of others ahead of their own, to ensure vital PPE supplies could reach the NHS.

FORS Gold member Powerday teamed up with London Irish Rugby Club to support the NHS staff as part of the #PoweringTheNHS campaign. The initiative, funded by the waste management and recycling company, saw Powerday and London Irish make and deliver 25,000 meals for NHS staff working in London and local hospitals.

FORS Silver member Roadmarking Excel Ltd created

'Thank you NHS' road markings at Maidstone Hospital and Tunbridge Wells Hospital at Pembury on behalf of Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust, and worked alongside Volker Highways outside Chatham Maritime Hospital to complete essential line marking works at the Nightingale NEC Birmingham.

FORS Gold member Wilson James was involved in the creation of the NHS Nightingale Hospital in East London Nightingale hospital, co-ordinating the construction logistics of the build and supporting the NHS supply chain with the delivery of essential medical items.

FORS Associate Dawes Highway Safety used its manufacturing facility to recreate the well-known 'Stay Home, Protect the NHS, Save Lives' and 'Thank You NHS' messages for display on their sideguard safety system. The PeoplePanel® impact-tested flat panel safety system is used to warn cyclists and pedestrians to take extra care near larger vehicles.

Congratulations to all FORS members who went the extra mile to support their communities during this difficult time.

While relaxations on restrictions are announced, it will remain vitally important that the new working practices which fleet operators have put in place to increase protection for staff and ensure continuation of business remain in place for the long-haul as we learn to live with the effects of the pandemic.

As many have noted, this is our 'new normal', and FORS will continue to be ready to adapt our services when needed, to make sure we can support all our members in these unprecedented times.

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# Safe and secure

One of the most important elements of the vehicle walkaround check is ensuring that wheel nuts are tightened to prevent the wheels coming off. Ignore it – or fail to pay proper attention – and it could cause a major incident



Gary Thomas, Group Director of Wheely-Safe

**W**heel loss is a serious issue: when detached from a moving truck, a loose wheel can reach speeds of up to 93mph (150km/h), before potentially impacting with other road users at a force of around 10 tonnes.

Thankfully this isn't a scenario that happens too often, but a quick look on YouTube confirms that incidents occur all over the world. Thanks to the rise in dashcam use, many are now recorded and quickly go viral.

Even if the haulier concerned is 'lucky' and the incident unfolds without injury or damage to another party, the impact to their reputation could linger online indefinitely – attracting the attention of not only customers, but the Traffic Commissioner too.

A report published by the Transport Research Laboratory (TRL) in 2006 – and the most recent research of its kind – suggested the standard design of wheel fixings requires a thorough maintenance regime to adequately reduce the risk of detachment. However, even the best maintained fleets can be susceptible to issues out of their control.

## Be safe, be seen

Most truck operators choose to fit brightly-coloured wheel nut indicators in an effort to protect against wheel loss, but these are reliant upon the driver inspecting each wheel before every journey. And even where that happens, these mechanical devices



Incidences of wheel loss reported on social media by Cheshire Constabulary (above) and Lancashire Road Police (bottom right)

cannot warn the driver if a wheel nut starts to work loose on the road. After all, wheels don't fall off stationary vehicles.

But there is now a solution on the market, and it's available for everyone from owner-drivers to the biggest logistics fleets. For the last 18 months, Staffordshire-based technology firm Wheely-Safe has been supplying truck, bus and coach fleets with the world's first in-motion driver alert system, which detects the onset of wheel loss before detachment.

"Existing systems on the market are mechanical devices to try and keep the wheels on, but they don't legislate for all scenarios," says Gary Thomas, Group Director of Wheely-Safe.

"What we offer is a final control measure. These other devices are great, but they don't cover every potential pitfall, whereas the one we have developed is a final catch-net."

Thomas founded Wheely-Safe with his old school friend Gary Broadfield in 2010. Their goal, from the

outset, was to revolutionise wheel and tyre security through the development of simple, low cost and effective systems.

After three decades working in the industry, Thomas had seen more than his fair share of wheel-loss incidents. He spent eight years specialising in system and procedure compliance in vehicle maintenance, health and safety, and training.

"We used to assist in representing companies in court for transport offences," he says. "The case that really set us out on this route involved a torque wrench that had gone out of calibration. The engineer at the time thought that the wheel nuts were tight but,

because the wrench wasn't working properly, they were loose. The driver took the vehicle out and the wheel came off a little further down the road.

"You just can't legislate for that mechanical and human error. So, we needed something totally different. To look at the problem from a different angle."





## Re-design required

The different angle came from Broadfield – a former director of technology and serial inventor for Nokia. Broadfield believes the way standard wheels attach to hubs is flawed. He argues strongly that wheels would be less inclined to detach if they were secured with a single central nut – much like that on Formula One cars.

But he also admits that swapping the design of every wheel on the road isn't going to happen, so instead, he set out to develop a product that would eliminate the threat of wheel loss once and for all.

"Our technology means that, for the first time, a driver receives an alert the instant a potential wheel-loss issue is detected – no matter what speed they are travelling, or in what weather conditions – allowing them to pull over safely," says Broadfield, Wheely-Safe's Group Managing Director.

He was determined to make the technology simple enough for everyone to use and, after nearly a decade refining and miniaturising the original concept – as well as securing a series of complex, global patents – the product was launched onto the UK market.

The set-up is straightforward. Robust sensors fit to a bracket that straddles two wheel nuts. If a nut starts to loosen by just 1mm, a signal is instantly transmitted to the in-cab display unit, alerting the driver of the problem.

During development, additional features were added – including the TPMS and on-board heat sensor that, due to its location next to the wheel rim and braking mechanism, can also detect brake issues involving low or high temperatures.

In the event of wheel loss, the impact to a haulier's reputation could linger online indefinitely. Picture from Central Motorway Police Group



Gary Broadfield,  
Wheely-Safe's Group  
Managing Director



Feedback on the first generation system last year was impressive, picking up a string of awards, including being named Transport Technology of the Year at the National Technology Awards.

## Proof of the pudding

One firm that is planning to protect its entire fleet with Wheely-Safe's technology is Avon Material Supplies (AMS), after it was spared from a potentially catastrophic wheel detachment incident.

The aggregates business had been testing the product – which is also connected to its TyreWatch telematics system – on a selection of trucks and witnessed first-hand the huge safety benefits it offers.

"We had a driver who was coming away from a job near Southampton. An alert came through to us electronically that one of the wheel nut sensors had gone off, then a couple of seconds later another alert came through," says Paul Harper, Transport Manager at AMS. "We immediately contacted the driver and told him to pull over and inspect the affected wheel. Sure enough, there were three studs missing!

"If we hadn't had the system in place, it would have been an almost certain wheel detachment and we could have been dealing with a very serious incident," he added.

## Ultimate protection

"Some firms told us they fear that using a product

like ours questions the quality of their maintenance," admits Steve Jackson, who was brought in as Wheely-Safe's Managing Director in 2018. "But that's not the case at all. We are just offering protection against those scenarios that you have no control over."

The TRL report, published for the Department for Transport (DfT), estimated that there are between 150 and 400 detachments on UK roads each year, 10 to 27 of which result in injury, with three to seven fatalities. Relatively small numbers, perhaps but, as Thomas points out, "those figures are only the reported incidents".

He explains: "Some fleets have said to me 'we've never had a wheel loss before'. That may well be the case, but they've been very lucky because there are so many variants involved with keeping the wheel on and so many variants that can cause the wheel to come off. My response is always the same: 'why do you fit a fire alarm in your house if you haven't had a fire before?'"

"Because if you do have a wheel loss, the implications, potentially, are terrible," he adds. "I've experienced it and when you get that call to say 'boss we've lost a wheel' it's a sick feeling you get in the pit of your stomach. It's horrendous."

Looking at the global potential for the product, Jackson adds: "It's absolutely huge and we are very proud that it was developed right here in the UK. We

don't see any reason why it can't be fitted to every truck and trailer in the world."

The Wheely-Safe team is currently expanding its range further, with a new generation of systems expected to launch in the coming weeks. The new range will be fully customisable, allowing operators to pick precisely the right level of protection to suit their fleet and budget – including easy-fit solutions with solar-powered in-cab receivers, or a fully connected system which will operate with the vehicle's telematics.

Lancashire Police reported this truck wheel detaching and embedding in a car on the M6 in May 2019





# Perfect harmony

Changing working and living conditions post-pandemic could see changes to the way people travel around cities and urban areas. **John Kendall** explores what impact these changes could have on vulnerable road users as well as commercial vehicle drivers

“

When the country gets back to work, we need them to carry on cycling, and to be joined by millions more

”

London boroughs have the highest population density in the UK, which in terms of traffic means the highest concentration of pedestrians, cyclists, skateboarders, scooter riders, motorcyclists, cars, buses, vans and trucks that you are likely to find in the country.

As the UK starts to see the Covid-19 pandemic recede, people have collectively avoided public transport. This measure is more difficult in the capital than elsewhere in the country, but while the country remains even partially locked down, the demand for public transport will be reduced.

On the whole, the UK population has complied with the government lockdown rules – in fact many had begun to limit their activities before the lockdown was introduced. As the virus recedes, public attitudes to resuming normal daily lives will also be cautious. That means people are likely to be more averse to using public transport where other options are available – and even where they are not, social distancing will reduce the passenger capacity of buses and trains.

## Bike use increase

As the Government has observed, in some places there has been a 70 per cent rise in the number of people using bicycles during the pandemic, no doubt helped by the good weather in May, as well

as people shunning public transport. In the words of Grant Shapps, the Secretary of State for Transport: “When the country gets back to work, we need them to carry on cycling and to be joined by millions more. With public transport capacity reduced, the roads in our largest cities, in particular, may not be able to cope without it.”

To accommodate this increased demand, the Government, “... expects local authorities to make significant changes to their road layouts to give more space to cyclists and pedestrians”, according to Shapps.

For drivers of vans, trucks, buses and coaches

around London, this already paints a picture of more people, with varying levels of experience and competence, taking to the streets on bikes.

Drivers of those vehicles who already need eyes in the back of their heads to look out for vulnerable road users, could usefully sprout more eyes in more places to ensure keeping watch on those vulnerable road users.

Changes to road layouts could also prioritise road space for cycling and walking.

The Government has already announced schemes for encouraging more of us to walk and cycle. On 9 May, the Transport Secretary announced that “...

pop-up bike lanes with protected space for cycling, wider pavements, safer junctions, and cycle and bus-only corridors will be created in England within weeks.”

This was announced as part of a £250 million emergency active travel fund. The cash will come from a £5 billion funding scheme for cycling and buses announced in February.

The Government pledged to fund and work with local authorities to improve cycling facilities. This includes Transport for London, which has announced that it will add a further 18 miles (30km) of permanent cycle lanes to its existing 100-mile





- long cycleway network this summer, as well as other improvements for cyclists, such as 1,000 more cycle parking spaces.

#### Infrastructure investment

The Government is not only supporting infrastructure changes to help promote cycling, it is also actively encouraging people to get in the saddle with a series of incentives. This includes the 'Cycle to Work' scheme, launched as long ago as 1999 and still active today.

The scheme permits individuals to hire a bike and safety equipment using interest-free credit. The scheme usually operates over a period of 12 to 18 months, giving an effective saving of between 25 and 39 per cent on the price. Those who sign up for the scheme generally pay through salary sacrifice – repaying for the loan directly from their wages. At the end of the time, they can keep the bike for an additional payment. There are a number of providers of the scheme, which is offered by retailers across the country, with training for riders available from some. On 5 June, the scheme was extended to cover electric bikes (e-bikes) as well. Applications can be made online via the Cycle to Work website.

The government is not just offering funding for new bikes.

In late June it rolled out a scheme to offer up to 500,000 £50 vouchers for people to get their



existing bikes repaired. The bike repair funding will be taken as a £25 million slice from the £250 million emergency active travel fund mentioned earlier.

#### Transport alternatives

The Transport Secretary's announcement on 9 May included other initiatives too. Shapps revealed the fast tracking of trials of e-scooters. The programme was already under way, but the announcement brought it forward from 2021 to June 2020. The trials are also being extended from the four local authorities that were taking part, to every region in the country that wants to participate.

Currently, e-scooter use is not fully permitted in the UK and the trials have been designed to gather information on their safety, how they are used and whether the potential benefits can be realised. Scooters that are not being used as part of the trials will remain illegal for use on roads, cycle lanes and tracks as well as on pavements.

The trials will involve rental e-scooters which will allow hirers to unlock the e-scooter with an app, ride to their destination, park it and pay for the rental. For the purposes of the trials, e-scooters will be classed as motor vehicles, so will need to be covered by insurance and hirers will need to hold the correct driving licence to use them.

The government has defined an e-scooter as a motor vehicle fitted only with an electric motor, designed to carry one person standing, with a maximum speed of 12.5mph, two wheels and a total mass not exceeding 35kg. No formal training will be required to ride e-scooters limited to 12.5mph or 15.5mph (in line with the rules regarding pedal assisted electric bikes). E-scooters could obviously add to the vulnerable road users that truck drivers already need to monitor.

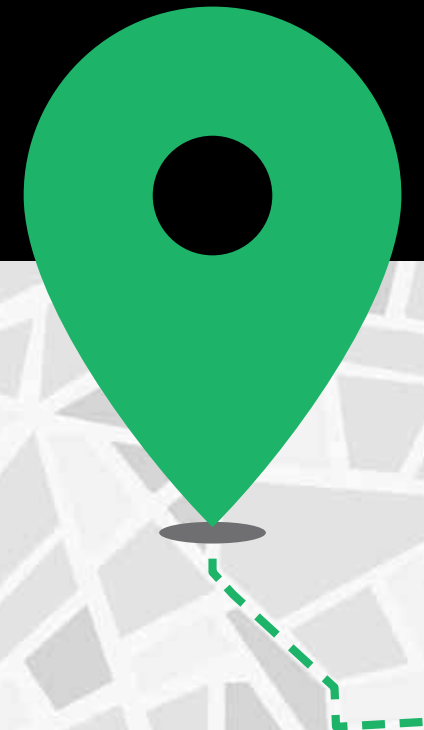


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# Preaching to the converted

When standard vans don't give the answer for all transport needs, converted models with specialised bodywork provide operators with many more options. **By John Kendall**

**S**pecialised conversions based on heavy vans – those available at 3,500kg gross vehicle weight (GVW) – make a up a small but significant sector of the light commercial vehicle (LCV) market. The most popular in 2019 were dropside and flatbed bodies, particularly with the building and horticultural trades.

Featuring open bodywork, dropside have low, hinged body side panels and a tailgate. The panels can usually be removed, along with the body corner pillars to which they attach, to form a flatbed body. A front headboard is usually attached to the body to protect the cab and occupants from a shifting load and also to provide a range of load securing points.

The second most popular conversions last year were tippers – again popular with those working in construction and gardening and landscaping. Tippers look similar to dropside bodies and often share some body components.

The principal difference is that the body is fitted with a tipping mechanism, usually mounted under the body, but sometimes at the front, which can tip the body to the rear and in some cases to the sides to discharge a bulk load.

The tailgate usually differs from a dropside by offering a choice of either top or bottom hinge, so that a variety of loads can easily be discharged. Like dropside, the body is usually fitted with a front gantry.

The third most popular body in 2019 was the Luton – a lightweight, high-volume enclosed body, suitable for carrying bulky, but comparatively light, loads.

The bodywork takes its name from the town of Luton in Bedfordshire, which was once the global centre of the hat making industry, producing around 70 million hats a year in the 1930s.

A Luton is distinguishable from a box body by the extension of the bodywork over the cab, often

fitted with an aerodynamic front panel on modern Lutons. This space was originally designed for the transporting of finished hats (hence the name), providing space for hundreds to be carried.

Insulated bodies were the fourth most popular last year. An example is that used by supermarkets for temperature-controlled home deliveries. Box bodies were the fifth most popular, while others include curtainside and car transporter/recovery bodywork.

## Market offerings

Most van manufacturers offer a range of ready-bodied conversions for the most popular bodywork included in their price lists. These vehicles can be ordered through the dealer network, reducing order lead times and also ensuring that the bodywork complies with all necessary legislation. These conversions usually carry a warranty to match the base vehicle too.

Alternatively, many van dealers will have contacts with local bodybuilders for less popular or one-off bodywork. Similarly, most van manufacturers offer a list of bodybuilders approved to supply less popular conversions fitted to their van chassis. Here's a round-up of what's available from the manufacturers, along with technical specifications.

## Citroën

Citroën's 'Relay Ready to Run' ready-bodied range covers the most popular conversion options. Citroën supplies chassis cab, chassis crew cab, back-to-back cab and floor cab variants of the Relay, enabling a wide range of bodywork to be fitted. Relay is available

Citroën's 'Relay Ready to Run' ready-bodied range covers the most popular conversion options



with chassis lengths L1, L2, L3 and L4, adding to flexibility for conversions. 140hp or 165hp diesel engine options are available.

**Price:** £31,060 to £37,760 (basic, ex-VAT)

**Relay Ready to Run range:** Luton; Low-floor Luton; Dropside; Box; Curtainside and Tipper

**Payload:** 879kg/1,441kg, depending on bodywork fitted.

**Relay Ready to Run:** Luton is available with L3 and L4 chassis offering bodywork with internal lengths up to 4,150mm and payloads up to 1,147kg. Dropside is available with L2 and L3 single cab bodywork and L3 crew cab. Payload runs up to 1,441kg and internal body lengths up to 3,644mm. Tipper models come with L2 single cab or L3 crew cab options. Payload extends to 1,222kg and internal body length up to 2,870mm. L3 and L4 single cab variants of the Box body are available, providing payloads of up to 1,051kg and internal body length up to 4,150mm. The Ready to Run Curtainside is offered in L3 or L4 lengths with a single cab, giving internal lengths of up to 4,150mm and payloads up to 965kg.

## Fiat

Fiat's 'Ready for Professionals' conversion range includes dropside and tipper models. Since the Ducato uses common cab architecture with the Citroën Relay and Peugeot Boxer, Fiat also offers the same range of cab options: chassis cab, chassis crew cab, 'back-to-back' cab and platform cab, while the four chassis lengths are M, ML, L and LX. 120hp, 140hp and 160hp variants of the

2.3-litre Multijet diesel engine are available and a choice of six-speed manual or nine-speed automatic transmission. The full range of cab options is available for one-off and bespoke conversions.

**Price:** £31,055 to £40,915 (basic, ex-VAT)

**Ready for Professionals range:** Dropside; one-way tipper and three-way tipper.

**Payload:** 1,062kg/1,530kg, depending on bodywork fitted.

**Ducato Ready for Professionals range:** includes the Dropside, available in two variants, with an

Fiat's 'Ready for Professionals' conversion range includes dropside and tipper models







**ABOVE:** Ford offers a comprehensive range of ready-bodied conversions

**BELOW:** The Isuzu Gafter chassis cab is available with two wheelbase options



available, with 105hp, 130hp and 170hp power options.

**Price:** £31,905 to £43,655 (ex-VAT)

**Ready-bodied One-Stop range:** includes Dropside, Tipper, Luton and Box Van.

**Payload:** full details available from Ford dealers.

**Ready-bodied range:** 2-tonne Transit is available with dropside single and double cab, one and three-way tipper with single and double cab – single cab variants can be specified with aluminium side boards and a tool pod. Luton and low-floor Luton bodywork is also available with a single cab. Chassis lengths L2 to L5 are available with these Transit conversions depending on model.

## Isuzu Truck

Isuzu Truck may be better known for its heavier models but features a range of its Gafter chassis cab models at 3,500kg GVW, suitable for bodywork conversions, as well as the company's Driveaway range of ready-bodied models. The Gafter chassis cab is available with two wheelbase options. Power choices include 120hp and 150hp diesels, the latter available with a wider cab. Bespoke body options are available through the dealer network.

**Price:** full details available from Isuzu dealers

**Driveaway range:** Dropside; Tipper and Utilitruck tipper with tool pod.

**Payload:** 960kg/1,420kg, depending on bodywork fitted.

**Isuzu Gafter Driveaway range:** Gafter Driveaway tippers are available with two wheelbase lengths, providing two overall lengths and are supplied with a choice of 120hp (for the shorter model) or 150hp (for the longer model) diesel engines, depending on model. Dropside models are offered in two lengths, giving internal body lengths of 3,108mm and 4,445mm, both powered by the 120hp diesel engine. The Utilitruck tipper features a sizeable tool pod behind the cab, restricting internal body length to 3,300mm, but providing secure storage for tools and equipment.

## Iveco

The Iveco Daily is available as a chassis cab and crew cab in four wheelbase lengths for 3,500kg single cab GVW models and two wheelbase lengths for crew cab models. The 'Daily DriveAway' offers a range of ready-bodied models.

**Price:** full details available from Iveco dealers.

**Daily DriveAway range includes:** Curtainside; Box; Luton; Tipper and Dropside variants.

**Payload:** full details available from Iveco dealers.



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## Conversions

- **Conversions range:** Daily DriveAway offers an extensive range of converted models direct from Iveco dealers. Tipper models are available as both one-way and three-way tippers. Manual and automatic transmissions are available and Iveco offers a range of optional equipment.

### Maxus

The Maxus (formerly LDV) EV80 battery electric range is available in chassis-cab form, the basis for the company's ready-bodied range. The battery electric power option is reflected in the price and available payload for these models, although discounts for London Congestion Charge and Ultra Low Emissions Zone would apply to the all-electric range.

**Price:** £60,650 to £64,200 (ex-VAT)

**Ready-bodied range:** Luton; Dropside; Tipper.

**Payload:** 910kg/950kg, depending on bodywork fitted.

**The Maxus ready-bodied range includes:**

Dropside, Tipper and Luton, all offered in two lengths with a single cab. All models are powered by the same 92kW motor with a 56kW/h battery pack. The model range is under review and it is worth checking with your local Maxus dealer for the latest information.

### MAN TGE

MAN entered the 3,500kg GVW ready-bodied conversions sector at the CV Show two years ago and also supplies chassis cabs in three lengths as well as crew cabs in two lengths for bespoke conversions.

**Price:** full details available from MAN dealers.

**Ready-bodied "Vans To Go" range:** Dropside; Tipper and Luton.

**Payload:** full details available from MAN dealers.

**The MAN 'Vans To Go' ready-bodied range includes:** Dropside, Tipper and Luton bodies covered by the manufacturer's three-year warranty to match that of the TGE. MAN offers single length models for each body with the dropside at 4,300mm long and the tipper 3,270mm long. The Luton offers an internal length of 4,250mm.

### Mercedes-Benz

Mercedes-Benz launched its 'Ready to Work' programme as a pilot project in 2017, making it more mainstream a year ago with an established three model range based on the popular Sprinter. This is in addition to the Sprinter chassis and double cab range available for bespoke and one-off conversions.

**Price:** from £36,070 to £41,490 (ex-VAT)

**Ready to Work range includes:** Dropside; Tipper and Luton



**Payload:** 741kg/1,306kg, depending on bodywork fitted.

**Mercedes-Benz grew the Ready to Work range in 2019 adding:** ready-bodied Dropside, Tipper and Luton range to market. Dropside is based on the Sprinter 314 L2 or L3 chassis-cab, providing internal body lengths of 3,409mm or 4,308mm. The one-way tipper is based on the Sprinter L2 chassis, offering an internal length of 3,320mm, while the Luton is based on a Sprinter 314 L3 chassis with internal length spanning 4,080mm to 4,200mm.

### Nissan

Nissan's NV400 is built in a joint venture with Renault and Vauxhall, sharing the same basic architecture. Nissan offers chassis and platform cabs as well as a ready-bodied Dropside and Tipper range.

**Price:** from £29,110 to £33,370 (ex-VAT)

**Ready-bodied range:** Dropside and Tipper

**Payload:** 845kg/1,426kg depending on bodywork fitted.

Ready-bodied Dropside and Tipper models are



The Iveco Daily is available as a chassis cab and crew cab in four wheelbase lengths

MAN entered the 3,500kg GVW ready-bodied conversions sector two years ago





**Mercedes-Benz launched its 'Ready to Work' programme in 2017**

► available with either front wheel drive or rear wheel drive. Front wheel drive dropside models are offered with either single or double cabs with two overall length options, while rear wheel drive models are only available with a single cab and two overall lengths. The tipper models are offered with single cab only and one overall length each, for both front and rear drive models. All rear-drive models also feature twin rear wheels.

### Peugeot

The Peugeot Boxer is built in a joint venture between Groupe PSA and Fiat and it shares the same basic architecture as the Citroën Relay and Fiat Ducato. The Boxer range includes chassis cab, chassis crew cab, back-to-back cab and floor cab variants, enabling a wide range of bodywork to be fitted. Chassis lengths L1, L2, L3 and L4 are available. Peugeot offers 140hp or 165hp diesel engine options.

**Price:** £30,520 to £38,220 (basic price, ex-VAT)  
**'Built for Business' conversions range includes:**

Dropside; Tipper; Box; Curtainside; Luton and Low-floor Luton

**Payload:** 879kg to 1,441kg, depending on bodywork fitted.

Boxer Built for Business is Peugeot's ready-bodied range: Luton is available with L3 and L4 chassis, with internal lengths up to 4,150mm and payloads up to 1,147kg. Dropside comes with L2 and L3 single cab bodywork and L3 crew cab. These give payloads up to 1,441kg and internal body lengths up to 3,644mm. Tipper is offered with L2 single cab or L3 crew cab options. Payloads extend to 1,222kg and internal body length up to 2,870mm. L3 and L4 single cab variants of the Box body are available, with payloads of up to 1,051kg and internal body length up to 4,150mm. The Built for Business Curtainside is offered in L3 or L4 lengths with a single cab, giving internal lengths of up to 4,150mm and payloads up to 965kg.



**The Peugeot Boxer is built in a joint venture between Groupe PSA and Fiat**

### Renault

Built in a joint venture with Nissan and Vauxhall, the Renault Master is available as a chassis cab, crew cab and platform cab. Renault also provides a range of ready-bodied conversions as well as recognised conversions for bespoke bodywork. Models are powered by Renault's dCi 130 or dCi 145 engines, depending on model.

**Price:** £30,930 to £38,500 (basic price, ex-VAT)

**Conversions range:** Dropside; Tipper; Box and Luton low loader.

**Payload:** 808kg/1,351kg, depending on bodywork fitted.

**Renault's off-the-shelf conversions include:** Master Dropside, Tipper, Box and Luton low loader. Both Dropside and Tipper are available with a crew cab. Dropside and Tipper are available in three lengths (L2, L2 long overhang and L3), with a choice of front-wheel-drive or rear-wheel-drive. ►



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► Tipper bodies are available in either steel or steel and aluminium. Both the Luton low loader and box vans are offered

with a single cab and single length (L3) chassis.

### Renault Trucks

Renault Trucks sources the Master from Renault, including the chassis cab, crew cab and platform cab and offers a full range of conversions through



**TOP: Renault Trucks sources the Master from Renault**

**ABOVE: Vauxhall Movano is built in a joint venture with Renault and Nissan**

**BELOW: Volkswagen offers its range-topping Crafter chassis cab in both single and double cab models**

its approved converters. Front-wheel-drive, rear-wheel-drive and four-wheel-drive options are all available.

**Price:** full details available from Renault Trucks dealers.

**Conversions range:** Dropside, Tipper, Box and Luton low loader.

**Payload:** full details available from Renault Trucks dealers.

**Renault Trucks Master Red Edition 'Ready for Business' range:** diesel and electric power are available for the revised Master range with 135hp, 145hp, 150hp, 165hp and 180hp diesel and 180hp electric options. The latest Master Red Edition models are joining the range and full details

of the Ready for Business conversions are being finalised. Current models include Curtainsider models with single or double cab, offering a 4,170mm long load floor and up to 1,175kg payload. Both FWD and

RWD models are available. The Urban Chiller model features refrigerated bodywork with a payload of 1,025kg and choice of diesel or electric power.

### Vauxhall

Vauxhall Movano is built in a joint venture with Renault and Nissan, sharing its architecture and powertrain options with those models. Vauxhall offers a range of ready-bodied conversions as well as chassis cab, chassis crew cab and platform cab options for bespoke conversions. Chassis cab and chassis crew cab models are available in both FWD and RWD, while platform cab versions are front-wheel-drive only.

**Price:** £31,850 to £40,775 (ex-VAT)

**Conversions range:** Dropside; Tipper and Box bodies.

**Payload:** 808kg/1,351kg depending on bodywork fitted.

**Conversions range:** Dropside, Tipper and Box bodies are available from the Movano conversions range. Tipper models are available in one length for FWD models and two for RWD variants, with a single length for both FWD and RWD variants of the crew cab tipper. Dropside models are available with two FWD lengths and four RWD lengths, while crew cab dropside models are offered in two FWD lengths and two RWD lengths.

The box van is offered in a single length and FWD only.

### Volkswagen

Volkswagen offers its range-topping Crafter chassis cab in both single and double cab models, as well as a range of ready-bodied conversions. Three lengths are available based on the medium, long and long maxi wheelbase chassis.

**Price:** £32,335 to £38,945 (basic, ex-VAT)

**Conversions range:** Dropside; Tipper and Luton bodies.

**Payload:** 772kg/1,314kg, depending on bodywork fitted.

**Conversions range:** Volkswagen offers dropside tipper and Luton bodies in the Crafter ready-bodied range. Dropside models are available with single and double cab. Single cab models are offered in medium and long wheelbase (LWB), while the double cab is offered with LWB only. All dropside are FWD.

Tipper models are available in both FWD and RWD and with either single or double cab. A single length is offered for each model. Luton models are FWD only with a single length based on the Crafter LWB chassis.



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# Good as new!

The used truck market looks set for a boost, given the market conditions as the country moves out of lockdown, post-coronavirus. **Steve Banner** reveals what deals might be available for those looking to refresh their fleets

**T**ransport companies should enjoy a business boost as Britain emerges from the coronavirus lockdown, the economy starts to revive and more goods have to be transported. They may think twice before committing themselves to acquiring brand new trucks, however. A sudden Covid-19 spike later this year could result in a second

lockdown and the economy shuddering to a grinding halt again. No operator will want to end up paying for a pricy factory-fresh tractor unit with a vast sleeper cab and every extra on the options list that has to be parked up because work has run dry.

The answer could be to acquire a less-glamorous fleet specification used tractor unit with a smaller sleeper cab – the sort of truck that old haulage hands used to refer to as “a gaffer’s motor”. Considerably less expensive than their new equivalents, they can turn out to be dependable workhorses if they have been regularly maintained.

Though by no means as basic as gaffer’s motors of the past – especially when equipped with a Space Cab – DAF’s CF is among the closest modern equivalents.

Four- to five-year old CF Space Cab 6x2 units with 600,000km to 700,000km recorded, a 440hp MX-11 engine and a full service history can be picked up for a shade under £20,000, says Paul Young, Regional Asset Manager UK, Ireland and export, at Paccar Financial Europe (DAF’s in-house finance operation). “One that has covered closer

to 300,000km to 400,000km will cost you around £3,000 to £4,000 more,” he reveals.

Second-hand CF Space Cab 6x2s are available through DAF dealers under the manufacturer’s First Choice approved used scheme. Examples up to four years old with less than 500,000km to their name can be eligible for a comprehensive 12-month bumper-to-bumper manufacturer’s warranty, explains Young. If they are four to five years old with up to 600,000km recorded, then the warranty is driveline only.

## Well-loved lorries

Used trucks sold by franchised dealers are almost always ex-fleet vehicles whose first-life lease was written by the manufacturer’s in-house finance company. When they are returned to the finance house, the dealer network is used to dispose of the more desirable examples. “We try to retail the trucks we get back through the dealerships whenever possible,” says Chris Sharp, UK Head of MAN’s TopUsed approved used vehicles programme.

In a bid to preserve residual values, MAN tries

to avoid disposing of them to traders and does not put them into the auctions. Instead, it ships many of the trucks deemed to be unsuitable for sale through its UK dealers to overseas markets.

“We export around 15 per cent of the total,” he says.

Buyers looking for a used truck cannot always locate the one they want because many of the fleets that favoured them in the past have decided not to acquire them new in more recent times. Instead they have gone for bigger trucks that may be over-specified for their requirements – an XF Space Cab or even a Super Space Cab, in DAF parlance, rather than a CF – because they are anxious to attract and retain drivers given that they are in such short supply.

If a truck has never been sold new, then it cannot be sold used. That mean used buyers may have no



**Paul Young, regional asset manager UK, Ireland and export, at Paccar Financial Europe**



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## Used trucks

choice but to raise their game too, which can mean paying several thousand pounds more.

By doing so, however, they too should find that driver recruitment and retention become somewhat easier.

One reason why some big fleets have gone upmarket is that they use operating leases to acquire their tractor units. This means they get to use them for the duration of the lease, but do not actually own them.

Models such as DAF XF Space Cab/Super Space Cab usually boast healthy residuals, and that can bring down the leasing rate operators pay. As if to underline the drift to bigger and better, Scania's used truck website lists more R Series (and some S Series) than it does G Series.

Not that the latter should be dismissed. Look around and you are likely to discover that a 2016 G450 6x2 unit with a full maintenance history and a twin-bunk sleeper can be acquired for a touch under £30,000 if you can live with it having already covered 600,000km to 700,000km.

It is worth noting that Scania runs one of the country's few used truck showrooms. In Warrington, Cheshire, it is close to the M6. Used trucks can be leased instead of purchased outright. New or used, entering into any finance agreement represents a commitment – sometimes a substantial one – and businesses must be sure they can afford it before they sign up.

### A healthy selection

At the time of writing, Volvo was promoting a selection of 2016 vintage 16-plate FH4 6x2 460 units with Globetrotter cabs, I-Shift automated transmissions – all equipped with new in-cab fridges, a useful extra. From an own account fleet and maintained under contract by Volvo from new, they were covered by a manufacturer-backed driveline warranty extended from 12 months/180,000km to 24 months/360,000km – a handy incentive.

They were priced at a headline rate of £195 a week under a three-year finance lease agreement with Volvo Financial Services, which translates to £845 monthly.

Iveco, meanwhile, was offering Stralis E6 6x2 units from 2017. They were available subject to a three



year/130,000km-a-year operating lease with repair and maintenance included for a headline rate from £269 a week.

That translates to £940.19 a month after a £2,820.57 initial rental payment plus £225.47 a month for Iveco's Elements repair and maintenance package. "The majority of the trucks that come back to us have been subject to a first-life operating lease usually complemented by a repair and maintenance agreement," says Brett Reid, Iveco Pre-owned Market Manager for the UK and the Republic of Ireland. "That means we have full clarity on the history of the vehicle."

Considerably less expensive than their new equivalents, used trucks can turn out to be dependable workhorses if they have been regularly maintained



Used trucks sold by franchised dealers are almost always ex-fleet vehicles whose first-life lease was written by the manufacturer's in-house finance company





**The majority of used IVECO trucks have been subject to a first-life operating lease, usually complemented by a repair and maintenance agreement**



**Tom Morris, UK Head of Used Trucks at Mercedes-Benz**

Tom Morris, UK Head of Used Trucks at Mercedes-Benz, comments: "Some 75 to 80 per cent of the trucks we get back are 6x2 tractor units and 80 per cent of those are high roof sleepers. They can be anywhere from two years to seven years old, but usually they're three to four years old."

Typically these vehicles are likely to include Actros 2545 StreamSpaces with 2.5m-wide cabs with flat floors, adds Morris. Those who want to purchase a three-year-old example outright must think in terms of a £40,000 to £50,000 outlay.

Mercedes-Benz does not pursue a standardised one-size-fits-all approach to approved used truck warranties, says Morris. Customers can choose whatever they want commensurate with their budget, from a full bumper-to-bumper package to no warranty at all – a flexible approach likely to appeal to customers in today's tough climate.

"One of the big advantages of buying used is that the vehicles are immediately available," says Morris. Assembly plants shut during the pandemic, but although they have now reopened, delivery times for new trucks have lengthened.

Renault Trucks UK & Ireland has for some years enhanced the appeal of its second-hand tractor units by transforming some of

them into special editions. "We select high quality trucks and further enhance them with additional features such as microwaves and fridges, side skirts and distinctive cosmetic updates," says Used Truck Director, Peter Tye. "For example, our Quartz Edition Range T460 6x2s with black powder-coated paintwork, faux leather upholstery and a fridge sold out in days."

New or used, a second Covid-19 spike later this year accompanied by a sudden decline in work could lead to hard-pressed operators asking funders for a payment holiday. They may have little choice but to agree, unless they want to see agreements unilaterally terminated and trucks returned.

"We will certainly look with sympathy at such requests if they arise in future," says Young. Let's all hope that they won't.



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Fraikin operates a rental fleet 800-strong from seven locations



Dawsongroup Truck and Trailer Managing Director, John Fletcher



Neil McCrossan, Sales and Marketing Director, Northgate Vehicle Hire

# Something borrowed...

When trying to control costs and also maintain a fresh fleet, the answer could be to look at long-term vehicle rental contracts. **Steve Banner** assessed the options

**F**leet operators may be understandably wary of acquiring new trucks as the economy emerges from lockdown. A second Covid-19 spike could result in another downturn, leading to vehicles being parked up again. Further uncertainty caused by the

Brexit fallout at the end of this year could lead to even more disquiet.

These factors all add up to an argument in favour of renting trucks rather than committing to a lease agreement, or buying them outright. Rent and

lessees can send them back at a moment's notice if they run out of work. What happens to the vehicles then becomes the rental company's problem.

Many firms are likely to conclude that buying assets outright is unwise in the current climate – and that it makes better sense to rent to help conserve their cash.

"We're looking at a wave of uncertainty and we may face a period of austerity again, like it or not," says Dawsongroup Truck and Trailer Managing Director, John Fletcher.

"So the preservation of capital will be paramount at a time when the reserves of many companies have severely dwindled."

Dawsongroup has a fleet of approximately 12,000

trucks and trailers – half of which are out on contract hire with the remainder available to rent.

Meanwhile, Neil McCrossan, Sales and Marketing Director, Northgate Vehicle Hire, says: "Brexit hasn't gone away and the future remains very difficult to foresee, so why lock yourself into any kind of asset? You've got to maintain liquidity."

Mike Palmer, Client Development Director at rental broker Nexus Vehicle Rental, agrees. "There is also the point that although the truck manufacturers are re-opening their factories, they may only be operating at 40 per cent to 60 per cent of their normal capacity.

So, if you order a vehicle, you may be waiting six to nine months before it is delivered and your

“Preservation of capital will be paramount at a time when the reserves of many companies have severely dwindled”





**Mike Palmer, Client Development Director at rental broker Nexus Vehicle Rental**

▶ whereabouts in the queue may depend on how much you spend with the manufacturer concerned.”

## Instant access

Rental trucks are available immediately, Palmer points out. They also do not have to be shown as liabilities on a firm’s balance sheet. To a degree it is also possible to tailor them to meet the hirer’s needs. “Putting them into the customer’s livery isn’t a problem just so long as it is peeled off when the vehicle is returned,” he says.

“A truck can be fitted with cameras, for example, so that it meets FORS requirements,” adds Fraikin’s UK Head of Rental, Jackie Headon. With rigids grossing at from 3.5 to 26 tonnes plus tractor units, Fraikin operates a rental fleet 800-strong from seven locations. That is in addition to several thousand commercial vehicles out on contract hire.

As a broker, Nexus has access to over 100,000 light commercials and upwards of 50,000 trucks available for hire, says Palmer. Clients include supermarket chain Morrisons, which sourced over 500 vehicles through Nexus during the pandemic.

Nor are corporate customers obliged to pay the sort of spot-hire rate they would be faced with if they wanted to rent a vehicle for a day or a week. Long-term rental deals can be set up with charges that are a lot more attractive.

## Details of the deal

This type of acquisition might be new to a lot of people, so there are a number of questions that need answering, such as: what actually constitutes a long-term deal? “Something in the six- to 12-month range,” says Palmer.

What happens if you agree to take a van or truck for, say, nine months, then send it back after only six months?

“Typically you will pay the difference between the six-month rate (which will be higher) and the nine-month rate (which will be lower).”

Some types of deal insist customers pay all the outstanding rentals if they return the vehicle ahead of schedule. The penalty in reality is likely to be influenced by a number of factors, however.

These factors include: the reason why the vehicles are being returned early (maybe the operator wants to swap some 18-tonners for some 26-tonners from the same rental fleet) and how long the client has been doing business with the hire company concerned. “We’ve got relationships with customers that date back 40 years,” says Fletcher. “It doesn’t help us to be punitive.”

## Aftercare packages

Efficient support is vital to help ensure a rental client’s loyalty. Dawsongroup operates a 24-hour call

centre that hirers can contact if they need emergency back-up. “If there is a problem then we’ll be out to the vehicle concerned within 90 minutes,” states Fletcher. If the problem proves tricky then the truck or trailer can be swapped for another one. Dawsongroup looks after all the maintenance and statutory inspections and boasts an average 97 per cent first-time MOT pass rate.

Fraikin lays stress on customer back-up too. It has just added seven

3.5-tonne Mercedes-Benz Sprinter vans and six mobile technicians to its national support network, boosting the number of technicians to 22.

Opting for a six- or 12-month long-term rental deal such as Fraikin’s Xtend can cost up to 20 per cent more than the contract hire rate for a similar vehicle, says Headon – the price paid for the flexibility that rental offers. Extricating from a leasing agreement is likely to be more difficult and more expensive.

## Balancing the books

Making a meaningful comparison between rental and leasing rates is not always easy, says Fletcher.

When talking, for example, about standard 18-tonne day-cab curtainsiders with no modifications, there may not be a huge disparity between the two figures. If a business is leasing trucks, however, then it may want to specify all sorts of detailed features to match the vehicles to its exact requirements and the rate charged will be impacted accordingly.

“Long-term rental can in fact cost less than contract hire bearing in mind that a replacement van, servicing and MOT testing are all included,” says McCrossan.

Acquiring a truck with highly-complicated specifications that are unique to the customer concerned on a long-term rental deal is likely to be problematic because the hire company may be unable to rent it out again when it is returned. That said, many rental fleets include trucks with specialist, though not unique, bodies with a fairly wide appeal. Essex-based Scammell Commercial’s line-up includes skip wagons and hook-loaders, while Staffordshire’s N D Brown can supply hot boxes and road sweepers. Both firms are FORS Associates.

## Environmental credentials

Price and back-up are not always the sole considerations when dealing with a hire company. Its environmental credentials can matter too, especially if a customer using its vehicles is tendering for certain types of work.

N D Brown supports carbon-saving projects around the world to balance out the carbon emissions it causes, making it a carbon neutral organisation.

Its activities include backing a project to prevent unplanned deforestation in the Amazon region and another programme which promotes reforestation in Kenya.

Based in the country’s Great Rift Valley, the



programme is run by the Escarpment Environment Conservation Network.

Its aim is to mobilise the capacity of the valley’s community to rehabilitate, conserve and protect the natural ecosystems, says N D Brown – and promote the sustainable maintenance of a clean, healthy environment.

Over the years, activities such as charcoal burning and logging for timber have severely depleted the forest vegetation cover, resulting in such harmful effects as streams and rivers drying up, soil erosion and the disappearance of wildlife. Planting trees in the areas that have been degraded the most will help to reverse this trend.

Over 180,000 have been planted since the programme began and more and more community-based organisations are getting involved in the work.

**Price and back-up are not always the sole considerations when dealing with a hire company**



**N D Brown supports carbon-saving projects around the world**



# Under pressure

Tyre overloading is sometimes described as a hidden problem, but it is a very serious issue that drivers and fleet managers should be aware of. **By Richard Drinkwater** of technical support specialist SV Tech

We are seeing an increased number of people fitting larger diameter alloy wheels to their vehicles. In many cases these sizes are well above what is listed and/or specified by the manufacturer. This fitment may not be a problem. However, in a few recent cases of Mercedes-Benz Sprinter vans, some self-build conversions and Volkswagen T5/T6 camper conversions, the customer has fitted wheels and tyres that are under-rated to the original vehicle specification.

It is very important when picking a new alloy wheel and tyre combination, that both the wheel load capacity and tyre load index rating meet with the axle design capacity. For some wheels, the load capacity is stamped on the inner rim of the wheel, while the supplier's website should also list the load rating per wheel, ie. 850kg per wheel. As vehicles have two wheels across the axle on most smaller models, the calculation to work out the load capacity across the axle is: 850x2 = 1,700kg

## The weighting game

Before purchasing new wheels and tyres, the buyer should first check what axle ratings have been listed on their vehicle's chassis VIN plate. For a Volkswagen, the plate can be found within the top corner of the engine bay and looks similar to the image (left).

The group of four numbers refers to a number of different factors.

The top line (3,000kg) relates to gross vehicle weight (GVW) maximum weight limit, the second line (5,200kg) indicates the gross train weight (GTW) maximum combined weight of vehicle and trailer, the third line (1,600kg) is the front axle design limit and the final line (1,625kg) shows the rear axle design limit. In this instance, both the wheel and tyre that are fitted must have a capacity of at least 813kg (1,625/2) to cover maximum rear axle load.

Worryingly, most people buy their new wheels based on looks and completely overlook the importance of load capacity. That said, matters aren't helped by the wheel suppliers, whose websites can lack the technical information to advise the buyer of the load capacity. Ultimately, if the load capacity isn't listed, it's uncertain whether or not the wheels have been designed to take the load imposed on the axle.

## Tyre information

When changing tyres, operators or drivers should check both the load capacity and size being suitable for the wheel. The tyre load rating is usually listed as either a two-digit or three-digit number after the tyre size.



In the example above, the tyre size is 205/55R16 and the important load capacity (load index rating) is the figure 91.

Load index tables provide users with the maximum load per tyre. In the instance of a load index rating of 91, the load capacity is 615kg for each tyre. Based on our chassis VIN plate example above, the above tyres providing a maximum load per axle of 1,230kg would not be suitable for use on this vehicle.

The Volkswagen plate would require a tyre load index rating of at least 101. It is worth noting that many tyres have two numbers listed after the tyre size, eg. 109/107. Pay attention to which is relevant for your vehicle – the first number (109) relates to vehicles with wheels in single formation (eg. one wheel at each corner), the second number (107) relates to wheels in twin formation (eg. a twin rear-wheel Transit).



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These systems are often used to trickle charge on-board battery systems to power everything from engine starts to refrigeration and even tail lifts and lifting decks.

The panels are ultra thin and highly durable and can be attached to the vehicle roof via simple adhesive tape. No need to drill holes. They are also modular and can be connected together to create more amp / volts and then replaced individually in the unlikely event one is damaged.

They come in two sizes – 30W producing 2 amp / hour and 100W producing 6. They are both 12v panels. Joining two together of same sizes creates 24v. Aspöck then provides a controller for up to 30 amps that protects the system and controls the charging performance. Multiple panels and controllers can be used on a single vehicle.

Aspöck has worked with several major fleets and produced several “Plug and Play” solutions. Some examples follow:

### Refrigeration trickle charge

The ever-increasing use of refrigerated trailers coupled with requirements to reduce emissions on vehicles has created an ideal opportunity to utilise the solar technology. Typically, operators struggle with the starter battery remaining charged. A specialist engineer from the fridge manufacturer is often required to “jump start” when this happens and there are considerable charges involved.

Aspöck has provided a single 30W panel with controller which is mounted on the roof of the trailer. This provides 2amp per hour during daylight, meaning that even if the trailer sits for a day or two, the starter battery remains charged.

### Vehicle battery maintenance

With a similar arrangement to the

refrigeration system, Aspöck has produced a retrofittable kit that can be quickly installed on a vehicle to prevent battery power loss when the vehicle is not being used.

### Interior lights and cameras

For a fleet, trailer security is often a difficult issue, particularly when a trailer is uncoupled from any power source. Aspöck was able to design a system where discreet onboard batteries were charged via the solar panel, maintaining both the interior lights and camera / recording equipment. Alerts can then be sent via vehicle tracking. A second version was also installed on trailers with an advanced electrically-powered security door system.

### Tail-lift solar power supply

A significantly more demanding application is providing the power to a supermarket vehicle to run the tail-lift. Fitted with 2 x 100W panels generating 6amps @ 24v, the need for power from a tractor unit via an Anderson connection is removed. This protects the truck battery and also saves fuel. While testing, it was found that the battery system depleted just 3V with 50 operations. Recharge was in a couple of hours.

This vehicle has been in service through the last winter without issue.

These are just a sample of the applications we have resolved both on and off highway. Aspöck will provide a design service and installation training for any fleet looking to harness this technology.



“The panels are ultra thin and highly durable and can be attached to the vehicle roof via simple adhesive tape”

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# Direct Vision Standard

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The scheme was created to improve the safety of all road users, particularly vulnerable road users like pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists.

The Direct Vision Standard (DVS) rates HGVs which are over 12 tons from 0 Stars (lowest) to 5 stars (highest). The Direct Vision Standard is based on the measurement of driver's vision through the windows of the HGV cab.

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# FOR FURTHER INFORMATION AND STOCKIST DETAILS CONTACT

Amber Valley Developments LLP  
Tel: +44 (0)116 240 2968  
Email: [sales@amber-valley.co.uk](mailto:sales@amber-valley.co.uk)  
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3 Red }  
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2 Black Ground  
3 Blue Left indicator  
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For 2020, Vision UK is offering safety equipment meeting the requirements of DVS, FORS and CLOCS schemes, to provide a higher level of driver assistance than is required by the guidelines



- Blind Spot Vision System for Construction Logistic Operators
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Frodsham Business Centre, Frodsham, Cheshire WA6 7FZ

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