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Welcome

The majority of people will be delighted that we are nearing the end of 2020 – a year like no other that has seen major changes to how we work and live our lives. A very difficult time for many, with more downs than ups, but there have been some bright spots. With that in mind, I'd like to take a look back and look at the positives that have come out of FORS this year.

In January – before anyone had really realised what lay ahead – FORS became the official supporter of mental health charity Mates in Mind. Given the pressures of work – whether continuing a role, being furloughed or losing a job – it was a timely tie-up and one that benefited lots of individuals within the transport sector.

As the country locked down in March, FORS remained committed to run all its FORS Professional Manager classroom-based training courses as live online webinars. By the end of April, it was announced that more than 360 managers had been trained via webinars, vindicating the decision to move courses online.

To help out FORS members, some of the FORS Associates introduced their free offers in May on FORS online, including webinars, guidance and access to information and online tools. Also in May, the role of one particular Gold member was

highlighted. Wilson James played a vital role in getting the Nightingale Hospital in East London established, having coordinated the construction logistics and also delivering essential medical items.

July saw the first international operator achieve FORS Gold accreditation (more on page 8). Driessen Specialtransport, from the Netherlands, passed its first Bronze audit in 2013, progressing to Silver in 2017.

Time Smart – an addition to the FORS Professional training portfolio for managers – launched in the same month.

It features two interactive webinars and a free manager toolkit.

As life hopefully begins to get back to normal – or the new normal, as some might argue – through the early part of 2021, there will hopefully be more positives to come.

Best wishes for the holiday season.

Enjoy the issue,

**Matthew Eisenegger,
Editor**



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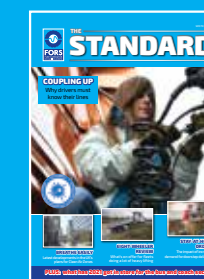
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FORS helps van drivers during busy delivery season

Van drivers have been encouraged by FORS to ensure they are driving safely and efficiently as the seasonal boom in eCommerce made roads even busier.

Black Friday in November heralded the start of the Christmas rush for retailers as consumers made the most of online deals. This year, with national lockdown restrictions – and then the subsequent implementation of tiers across England – online shopping levels are even higher than normal.

“The ongoing shift to online retail has been amplified by Covid-19 lockdown restrictions, meaning more deliveries, many of which are completed by vans,” said Paul Wilkes, FORS Business Services Manager. “What is more, SMMT figures show a 13.3 per cent increase in new van registrations in October – the highest October on record with 28,753 units

registered.” Wilkes added that FORS offers operators and drivers a best practice model. “This [model] includes training and online toolkits, starting at the Bronze entry level and moving progressively through our programme, to ensure van drivers are working as safely and efficiently as possible.”

To help reduce work-related road risk and improve safety for van drivers and vulnerable road users, FORS Professional Van Smart eLearning training at FORS Bronze is available.

Meanwhile, at FORS Silver, Van Smart training includes a classroom-based module and on-cycle training. This additional training encourages drivers to learn how vulnerable road users view the road.

There is also the ability for van drivers taking the course to learn anti-idling techniques, understand the importance of route planning and practice correct vehicle loading. These

elements are designed to help lower emissions and costs associated with additional fuel use.



TrailerLock holds universal key to fridge trailer security

A universal key for TrailerLock's fridge trailer door lock has been launched by the company, which means that any driver can access any trailer using their own key.

Manufactured from solid steel,

simple to operate and resistant to bolt-croppers and crowbars, FridgeLock is extendable and fits most types of surface-mounted door furniture.

A barrel lock, protected by a coated steel cap, needs just a half turn to open the two sections of the device, which is then adjusted for length and clamped over each of the vertical door rods.

In addition to protecting the vehicle load itself, FridgeLock protects drivers and continental operators by reducing the possibility of Border Force penalties, which can run into many tens of thousands of pounds.

Currently, 'civil penalties for clandestine entrants' amount to £4,000 per illegal entrant – £2,000 to be paid by the driver and £2,000 to be paid by the haulier. If these penalties are not paid, the vehicle can be seized and held until payment is made. If the penalty is not paid at all, the vehicle can be destroyed.



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Virtual classroom for FORS members arrives

A secure virtual platform that provides delegates with a more classroom-like environment has been launched by FORS.

FORS Professional Virtual Classroom was introduced in September 2020 and has been created to enhance

online learning. It comes after the decision was taken to deliver all FORS Professional manager training remotely for the foreseeable future, due to the effects of the ongoing pandemic.

The Virtual Classroom will allow attendees to all see each

other as well as the trainer during the live session.

A dedicated FORS Professional booking platform has also been rolled out to simplify the booking process, which, along with the Virtual Classroom 'demonstrates the commitment to the professional

development of FORS members' according to FORS.

"At the beginning of the lockdown in spring, we moved all FORS Professional manager training courses online to make sure our members could continue their professional development remotely," explained FORS Manager Sonia Hayward.

"However, we wanted to offer a more 'classroom-like' experience, so we developed the new Virtual Classroom to make sure that the learners benefit from a more engaging training experience."



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Hankook safety award double

Road safety charity Tyresafe has once again named Hankook as the winner of its Tyre Manufacturer Award 2020, the company having also won the title in 2019. The award recognises the continued contribution by Hankook to raise awareness of tyre safety over the past 12 months. During this period, Hankook UK launched three tyre safety campaigns across social channels related to: driving in the summer (the time of year most tyre-related incidents take place), maintaining tyre condition (including how to improve fuel consumption) and tyre tread and the type of tyres needed on vehicles.

"We are delighted to have won this highly-coveted award for the second year running and are thrilled to be recognised for the effort we put into sharing tyre safety messages with millions of drivers," said Zoë Baldwin, Marketing Manager of Hankook Tyre UK. "Hankook continues to raise awareness of the importance of tyre maintenance and the dangers of illegal tyres to reduce the number of tyre-related incidents."



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Going for Gold

Netherlands-based Driessen Speciaaltransport has become the first FORS member internationally to attain FORS Gold – the highest level of the

voluntary accreditation scheme.

The company, which transports specialist precast concrete, became a FORS member in 2013, passing the Bronze audit the same year. It progressed to Silver in 2017 and, at that point, the management team made it their mission to become the first Dutch operator to achieve FORS Gold.

Driessen Speciaaltransport chose FORS because it saw the scheme as a way to maximise efficiency and also demonstrate to its customers the level of experience within the business.

"Straight away we could see that FORS would be of huge benefit to us, giving us the tools to manage, control and maintain existing company processes, while improving

best practice and furthering the education and health of our drivers," said Fred Driessen, the third-generation owner of the business.

"Our FORS Bronze audit showed us how useful it was to gather information and maintain processes," continued the Dutchman,

He added that it was "a bit of an eye-opener" to have a good view of the company as well as its trucks and drivers.

Driessen explained that FORS had helped the company expand its status on an international level and also maintain high levels of safety within the business, but that it had also been of great importance operationally.

Driessen Speciaaltransport's CO2 levels across the vehicle fleet have reduced by six per cent since 2017, while other tools – such as FORS FMS, FORS Practitioner workshops and FORS Driver Licence Checking Service – have helped improve efficiency in other areas.



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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Expansion leads to relocation

On the back of several years of sustained growth, Totalkare relocated to a new, purpose-built facility in September.

The modern facility, located at Pensnett Trading Estate in Kingswinford, near Dudley, will enable Totalkare to optimise the workflow on the shop floor and increase capacity for holding stock of mobile column lifts, in-ground and mobile brake testers, headlamp testers, smoke meters, railway lifting jacks and other future products.

The relocation comes at

a time when Totalkare is also implementing an ERP system expected to drive a lot of internal and external efficiency improvements for the business.

Alongside these, a further investment in enhanced service management software is expected to further improve the company's service capabilities.

"Following the introduction of testing products to our portfolio of heavy-duty workshop solutions, Totalkare has outgrown its current premises," said Managing Director David Hall.

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Safety on the side for Mercedes-Benz

Mercedes-Benz has confirmed that low-entry Econic models now leave the production line with standard-fit Active Brake Assist 5, a system first seen in the new-generation Actros launched in 2019.

The latest version of the technology employs cameras for the first time, as well as radar.

Not only does this technology further increase safety for vulnerable road users and drivers of a vehicle that already leads the field in terms of direct vision, but it is also more accurate and reliable, while making the experience at the wheel more enjoyable and less stressful, particularly for those engaged in distribution and



Sideguard Assist further increases safety for vulnerable road users

associated applications. Sideguard Assist is also

now available for right-hand drive Actros models from June 2021 production. The system supports the driver when making left turns and changing lanes in busy environments where visibility may be restricted.

Within the system limits, it is designed to reduce the

possibility of incidents involving vulnerable road users.

Two short-range radar sensors mounted on the passenger side of the vehicle monitor up to a lane's width and deliver optical and acoustic warnings which alert the driver to the presence of cyclists, pedestrians or other vehicles.



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DEKRA starts as new Bronze audit provider

There are now three different providers of FORS Bronze audits after DEKRA Automotive was approved to offer the service in September 2020.

The UK division of the German parent company DEKRA joins Fleet Source and Drive Tech, the existing FORS Bronze audit providers.

FORS members are assured that the process for requesting audits remains the same and that these requests will automatically be allocated to one of the three audit providers.

DEKRA's business divisions

offer services around the UK in consultancy, claims and expertise, product testing and audits.

The company's audit division specialises in independent audits and assessments as well as certifications for various industries.

With restrictions still in place all over the country, all Bronze audits will be conducted remotely until 31 January 2021. From the 1 February 2021, FORS members who need audits to be undertaken have the option of them being completed either remotely or on-site.



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“And that's why I choose the market leader in driver risk management to train our drivers.”



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Summer showtime ahead

The first live and interactive exhibition and conference of its kind for fleet operators is coming to Farnborough on 30 June and 1 July 2021

The transport and logistics sector is alive with developments in technology and innovation. For operators, these developments can deliver increased efficiency and lower operating costs. As we move into 2021, technology and innovation will continue to have a major impact on the transport business. Also, with the growing clean air agenda – being driven by firm Government policy – vehicles that can meet low emission and clean air zones continue to be developed.

For operators, there is a want and need for technical information and details of how to stay ahead of the game. As FORS members are well aware, some of this is driven by legislation. Solutions that ensure continuing compliance within the operating environment mean businesses must adapt. But what changes need to be made and how can operators be ready for what is round the corner?

Modern, forward-looking businesses appreciate the benefits that can be obtained, driving down costs and removing unexpected bills, thanks to the use of technology



Visitors will have the opportunity to experience a range of ride-and-drive vehicles

and innovation. Then it comes to the hard question of what vehicles will operators buy as we head towards a zero-carbon economy.

While they may be happily wedded to diesel – and in the heavy-haul market this will be around for a while yet – it's likely that their customers will want suppliers which are not only green, but can demonstrate and measure it.

So, how can fleets keep up-to-date with this rapidly changing world – in which the Government's 10-point decarbonisation plan sees transport at its heart?

One way is via ITT Hub – Innovation and Technology in Transport – which is being

staged next summer at Farnborough International Exhibition & Conference Centre in Surrey, near the M25. It's an exciting new show and conference that – for the first time – brings together all road-based commercial transport. And, its 30 June-1 July dates mean that it's ideal for a radical new approach to shows with indoor and outdoor displays from an expected 160 exhibitors.

The newly-opened purpose-built £30m venue will host three key aspects to the event: a conference, exhibition and outdoor vehicle experiences. Visitors will have the opportunity to experience a range of ride-and-drive vehicles, both on site and on an adjoining two-mile-long demonstration route.

Operators now have to make key choices about their purchasing policies for the 'road to zero'.

A key part of ITT Hub next summer will be providing information and debate to assist those decisions.

ITT Hub has support from the Government Hub, a high-profile pavilion-style stand in the heart of the exhibition hall.

The dedicated area will see individual stands integrated into a large networking hub for meetings and presentations for up to 16 individual organisations.

The participants will also feature prominently in the conference sessions and at the welcome reception at the end of the opening day.

A comprehensive conference programme will be delivered over both days, based around four themes: future data, future vehicles, future strategies and future cities.

The programme will be delivered by thought-leaders, innovators and experts drawn from a wide range of businesses, with an opening address by British astronaut Major Tim Peake CMG.

As a new event in a strategically important part of the economy, ITT Hub will also provide an important platform for both national and regional/devolved Government and other stakeholder groups.

● To find out more about next year's event and to register, visit: www.itthub.co.uk



There will be a comprehensive conference programme at ITT Hub

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EXHIBITION



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BIG decisions

The traditional eight-wheeler remains the truck of choice for the construction industry. **John Kendall** takes a look at what's on offer in the 8x4 market

Tippers, mixers, concrete pumps, loader cranes – the traditional eight-wheeler chassis is a versatile platform. Other technologies have given more choice, such as the 'tridem' offering double drive with rear steer to provide more manoeuvrability but there is still a market for more traditional eight-wheelers. Here are the options...

DAF

The DAF construction range is focused on DAF's mid-range heavy truck, the CF, offering a range of day, sleeper and high-roof space cab with the FAD 8x4 chassis. All DAF heavy trucks feature

Iveco's comprehensive 8x4 range is based on two models



the company's Body Attachment Module (BAM) programme, which offers dedicated preparations for cranes up to 25 tonnes. BAM is designed to offer quick and easy positioning of tipper bodywork and cranes. CF equipment options include Predictive Cruise Control, Adaptive Cruise Control and Forward Collision Warning.

DAF also offers the lightweight FAD 8x4 mixer chassis, featuring 19-tonne single-reduction rear tandem axle and 7.1-tonne steer axles. With a kerb weight of 9,150kg, DAF claims it is the lightest mixer chassis in its class. The lightweight FAD chassis is offered with the 11-litre PACCAR MX-11 engine, with power outputs between 370hp and 450hp. Other 8x4 FAD chassis are available with the 13-litre PACCAR MX-13 engine with power outputs from 428hp to 530hp.

Engines are designed to run on a range of low-emission fuels as well as regular diesel. These include Gas-to-Liquid (GTL) synthetic diesel, Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) or Biomass-to-Liquid (BTL) synthetic diesel, offering claimed CO₂ reductions of five per cent, 90 per cent and 90 per cent respectively. Automated 12 or 16-speed TraXon transmissions are fitted as standard.

IVECO

Iveco's comprehensive 8x4 range is based on two models. Trakker is the quarry and construction model, designed to take the knocks at off-road sites, while Stralis X-Way is designed for lighter off-road work. Iveco claims the highest payload in its segment for Stralis X-way. Stralis X-Way is available with day and sleeper cabs with high and low-roof options.

Three set-ups for the cab are available, depending on the degree of off-road work. "On", is designed for on-road work with the lowest ground clearance. "On+" provides more ground clearance for on/off road work, while "Off" offers an off-road set-up with off-road gradeability and an approach angle greater than 25 degrees. Stralis X-Way is available with an 8.7-litre Cursor 9, an 11.1-litre Cursor 11 or the 12.9-litre Cursor 13 diesel, with power outputs between 310hp and 570hp.

Iveco offers a range of transmission options. This includes the 12- and 16-speed HI-TRONIX automated gearboxes with both direct drive and overdrive gearing. Sixteen-speed manual transmissions are also available, as is a fully-automatic Allison. Hydrostatic drive to the front

wheels is also an option. Trakker is the Iveco model for extended off-road work, with a choice of chassis frame thickness – 7.7mm for lighter work and 10mm for heavy operations. Trakker is available with a choice of short or long cab. Customers can choose from three suspension options: parabolic, semi-elliptical or air suspension. Cursor 9 and Cursor 13 engine options are available with power outputs spanning 360hp to 500hp for 8x4 models. The engines drive through a 16-speed manual or a choice of 12-speed automated for Cursor 9 engines or 12 or 16-speed automated transmissions for Cursor 13 engines.

MAN

MAN offers TGS and TGX models in its 8x4 range. TGX offers a choice of three sleeper cabs – XL, XLX and XXL with a choice of standard, high and extra high roof. TGS models are likely to be the more popular choice for 8x4 chassis with a choice of M day cab, L standard roof sleeper and LX high roof sleeper cab. Like its rivals here, the MAN 8x4s are available with a range of equipment and with chassis designed for specific purposes such as tipper, mixer and concrete pump. Three different ride heights are

All DAF heavy trucks feature the company's Body Attachment Module (BAM) programme





MAN offers TGS and TGX models in its 8x4 range

offered depending on application from road-going to off-road with all-wheel-drive. MAN offers selectable hydrostatic drive to the front axle to assist traction, without the weight and complexity of permanent all-wheel-drive. Predictive cruise control is among the options available. Drive axle options include single or hub reduction axles, with a choice of parabolic, trapezoidal and air suspension. The MAN D15 and D38 engine range for TGS and TGX covers 330hp to 640hp, while transmission options include MAN Tipmatic automated transmissions, available with on-road and off-road settings.

Mercedes-Benz

The Mercedes-Benz Arocs is the company's truck for the construction

sector with a range of models available for the 8x4 market. The standard cab for the Arocs range is the smallest, the 2,300mm wide S cab ClassicSpace featuring a 320mm high engine tunnel. In total there are 15 further cab options from the Mercedes S, M and L cab ranges, providing a choice of cab width, roof height and sleeper options.

For the chassis, Mercedes offers a choice of steel or air suspension. Mercedes offers two specialist Arocs variants for the construction sector: the Arocs Grounder and Arocs Loader designed for the mixer and tipper markets respectively.

Power options come from the Mercedes-Benz in-line six-cylinder range at 7.7-litres, 10.7-litres,

12.8-litres and 15.6-litres, offering a comprehensive range of power options between 238hp and 625hp.

Transmission options are centred on the Powershift 3 automated transmission, offering six application-specific variants. Manual transmissions are also available, providing a nine-speed option and three 16-speed variants.

Renault Trucks

Renault Trucks also offers two 8x4 ranges, providing models for the construction and heavy construction sectors. Range C models cover the construction sector, while the Range K is designed for heavy construction, offering higher ground clearance. Higher weights are available for special applications. Range K is offered in Medium, Heavy and XTREM variants – XTREM covering the higher weight options. Both Range C and Range K are available with a choice of day cab, night and day cab and sleeper cab. Chassis options include the Range C X load model, a lightweight model designed for the mixer market, using aluminium parts to improve payload. Chassis offer a range of wheelbases to match the required bodywork and offer a number of body attachment points. Suspension options include parabolic and semi-elliptical steel suspension.

Both 11-litre and 13-litre power options are offered for the Range C and Range K models with 11-litre power output spanning 380hp to 460hp. The 13-litre engines cover the 440hp to 520hp range. X load models are powered by the 11-litre engines.

Scania

Scania offers a comprehensive range of 8x4 models for a range of construction applications. All 8x4 models are available with the P-Series, G-series, R-series and S-series Scania cabs. This includes a full range of cab sizes and roof heights from a short day cab to Highline sleeper cab. Suspension options include parabolic and progressive parabolic steel and air with a choice of steel all round, steel front and air rear, or air all round. Scania offers two chassis heights: High and Normal.

High chassis are available with steel all round or steel front and air rear, while Normal chassis are available with all suspension options. Tippers are supplied with a gearbox-driven power take off (PTO) while mixers are equipped with a flywheel-driven PTO. All Scania construction trucks are offered with the optional XT specification for arduous conditions.

Power comes from the Scania range of 9-litre, 13-litre and 16-litre diesel engines, offering power outputs between 280hp and 770hp. Single and hub

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Renault Trucks offers two 8x4 ranges, providing models for the construction and heavy construction sectors

reduction axles are available with a choice of eight and 12-speed transmissions.

Volvo

The Volvo 8x4 range includes the long-haul FH, typically working on plant and beaver tail applications, the heavy-duty rough and tumble FMX as a steel tipper or tipper grab, to the payload sensitive FM with a lighter 11-litre engine to meet the requirement of the lightweight tipper market with engine options from 330 to 750hp – with the most popular rating at 420.

The new FM and FMX offers a 10 per cent improvement in direct vision, giving the medium height chassis full air-suspension FMX model three-star vision without the need for a window in the lower door. Even as an extra high tipper it has a one-star rating. All the new range have the option of a camera in the mirror arm that extends vision down the side more effectively than any window in the door, although a kerb-view window remains an option.

An indicator repeater in the door itself and side marker lamps which are activated in synchrony with the main indicator are options too. These options are available on all chassis heights.

One option to be considered, especially on tipper grabs where a sub-frame is required, is rear air suspension with a tandem axle lift axle that can be raised for when empty running. The air suspension option is available on both on-road and off-road defined vehicles.

Other active safety aids are electronic stability control, forward collision warning with emergency brake and lane departure warning, which gives an active input when combined with Volvo Dynamic steering. This reduces steering forces and dampens steer inputs back into the cab.



Scania offers a comprehensive range of 8x4 models



The Volvo FMX offers improved vision

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Heavy metal

On the road with the DAF FAW, a bulky but agile offering that suits a variety of needs. **By Dean Barrett**

British tipper operators have a wide choice of chassis to pick from, with options available to suit pretty much any configuration imaginable. Most users tend to spec eight-wheelers for payload and off-road performance, but manoeuvrability can be an issue for hauliers who need to work in tight building sites, twisting quarries or packed refuse locations.

Such operators may do well to look at a tridem, featuring three axles and offering rear-steer capabilities. Manoeuvrability is key with this spec and drivers have found they can often get such vehicles into places where more traditional eight-wheel rigids may struggle.

Back in 2017, DAF specced up its first tridem demo

for the UK in the form of a CF440 FAQ. FAQ was first launched in 2014 and an 8x2 version was added to DAF's British demonstration fleet to give operators an opportunity to try a different kind of vehicle for their applications, rather than stick to a standard eight-wheeler.

The demo unit was well received – but while its agility was uniformly praised, some operators felt they would still prefer a double-drive bogie for better off-road traction.

New kid on the block

Step forward DAF's new FAW. Launched

in 2019, this 8x4 chassis basically offers a 6x4 set-up with an additional rear axle – which enables operation at higher gross vehicle weight (gvw), along with the benefit of manoeuvrability similar to a 6x4.

FAW can be used with XF or CF cab and features a single-reduction double-drive tandem bogie rated at 26 tonnes, plus a steered, lifting trailing axle rated at eight tonnes. All three rear axles ride on air suspension.

DAF's new demo truck is rated at 32 tonnes gvw. The UK has a legal limit 24 tonnes across the rear three axles so, on the day of our drive, the demo unit

was loaded to 23,800kg at the rear and eight tonnes up front. That said, the truck was actually fitted with DAF's new 203N 10-tonne front axle – which would be a good option for operators who want to fit a crane behind the cab, for example.

FAW's turning ability is impressive. Compared to a conventional FAD eight-wheeler which has a kerb-to-kerb distanced of 20.3m, FAW can make the same turn in 15.4m. That's an improvement of nearly 5m – which can easily mean the difference between making a tight turn in one go without having to shunt. ▶



FAWs with CF can be specced with 11-litre 370, 410 or 450hp MX-11s, or 13-litre 430, 480 and 530hp MX-13s. Operators choosing bigger XF cabs can pick from MX-11 at 450hp, or MX-13 at 430, 480 or 530hp. Our demo XF was specced with 480hp MX-13 with a 12-speed TraXon automated gearbox.

New surroundings

Traditionally, tipper operators have favoured smaller day cabs, but this is changing. It's not uncommon to find tipper drivers doing longer distances and spending nights away from base, so bigger cabs are becoming more attractive. XF offers a more comfortable working and living space for

extended time out – and even with a lower roof, the XF Comfort cab has a spacious interior.

The test truck was not lacking in creature comforts, as it also features Xtra Leather Air seats, leather steering wheel, Xtra Comfort mattress, underbunk fridge and smart Dark Sand interior trim. DAF also loaded this FAW with the new Safe System, which includes nearside camera, audible left-turn warning, in-cab monitor, buzzer and LED warning lights.

Forward-facing, driver-side and load-space cameras are available as options, along with a four- or eight-channel video recorder and rear ultrasonic sensors. All the bits and pieces are fitted at the factory and are included in the vehicle's two-year warranty.

Behind the wheel

Our XF480 FAW tridem test drive kicked off at DAF's Motus Commercials dealership in Gloucester. Leaving the industrial estate, we picked up the A40 heading west towards Ross-on-Wye for a pleasant drive out in the sticks.

Loaded to 32 tonnes, we felt there was plenty of power available from the 13-litre engine and FAW felt very nimble with 480hp on tap. Taking a left turn on to the A4136 at Huntley towards Coleford, we began to encounter some twisting hills as we moved deeper into the Forest of Dean – but the tridem took them all in its stride, never breaking into a sweat.

We were heading for an old quarry in Whitecliffe, where we could take the tridem off-road for a few circuits of a twisting dirt course.

Turning in at the quarry gate, the ground was a bit boggy due to rain the previous day, so we used FAW's weight transfer system to dump air from the trailing axle on to the double-drive bogie to ensure our wheels didn't spin. The system is engaged via a button on the dash and disengages automatically after a short while.

The quarry road led through thick bushes, up and down lumps and bumps and around some very tight bends – and frankly, it would have been too much for a traditional eight-wheeler to handle without having to take a few shunts. But FAW's turning chops meant we rounded all the bends with ease – and it was immediately clear how much of a benefit this would be on a busy site.

Once we'd completed a fair few laps of the quarry, we began a loop back home via the A4151/A48. This took us through a number of narrow villages packed with vehicles, crossings and pedestrians – and FAW's positive handling made short work of it all.



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ABOVE: The Kar-go Delivery Bott from British start-up Academy of Robotics. It is now on trial in the London Borough of Hounslow

The green miles

In a bid to reduce emissions in urban and city environments, retailers are turning to electric power and alternative fuelled-vehicles. **By Steve Banner**

Pedal power is being employed by a leading supermarket chain to deliver groceries direct to consumers' doors as part of the home delivery explosion triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic. Now available in 20 cities across the UK, Sainsbury's Chop Chop service uses zero-emission cycle couriers to transport goods from 50 of the retailer's stores.

Customers can order up to 20 products from a tailored range of around 3,000 grocery and

household items using the Chop Chop app. It enables some 3.2 million households to obtain the goods they need within an hour.

Clearly there is a limit to the size of item that can be carried safely on a two-wheel pedal cycle. As such, Asda has been trialling a four-wheel electrically-assisted cargo bike developed in the UK by Electric Assisted Vehicles (EAV).

It is already in service with parcels delivery giant DPD and with London's Laundryheap, which collects

and returns laundry and dry cleaning within 24 hours. Able to travel in cycle lanes and fitted with a cargo body, eCargo can reach speeds of up to 15mph says EAV.

Tipping the scales at a modest 150kg, eCargo employs an ultra-lightweight chassis made from a flax and carbon composite. It can transport up to 10 crates full of shopping, which equates to two customer deliveries, says Asda.

"As we look to the future of retail, we have to consider new and innovative ways to continue to offer service to our customers while navigating low emission zones and pedestrianised areas," says Asda Vice-President of E-Commerce and Online Grocery Home Shopping, Simon Gregg. "A solution such as eCargo allows us to get into parts of towns and cities where access is limited."

Have no driver, will travel

Another way of doing so could involve electric driverless delivery vehicles such as Kar-go Delivery Bott from British start-up Academy of Robotics. It is now on trial in the London Borough of Hounslow, delivering medicines to a local chemist's clients. It can carry up to 48 packages, each of which is no bigger than a shoebox. For the purposes of the trial, however, it is transporting just six.

UK guidelines governing such trials require the vehicle to have somebody who can take control if necessary. Academy of Robots is complying with this requirement and has an operator on board.

Capable of travelling at around 60mph, Kar-go Delivery Bott is equipped with a battery pack that can be recharged fully in around three hours, says the manufacturer. It can reach 70 per cent of its maximum charge in an hour and costs a mere 1.2p a mile to power, the firm adds.

Customers have an app on their phone that notifies them when their package has arrived. They can then go outside and use the app to unlock the vehicle and retrieve whatever they have been waiting for. Range on a single charge? Sixty miles, says the company.

Being able to run autonomously and silently means that the newcomer can operate round the clock. That, of course, presupposes that whoever is destined to receive the items it is delivering is willing to nip outside late at night or early in the morning to retrieve them.

Hybrid commercial future

With UK sales of new diesel and petrol vans scheduled to be banned from 2030 onwards – plug-in hybrids are likely to enjoy a reprieve until



2035 – battery-electric light commercials look set to play an increasingly-important role in last-mile delivery, autonomous or not. All the leading light commercial manufacturers are stepping up to the plate and will be competing for sales with several new marketplace entrants.

US start-up Rivian has won an order for 100,000 electric vans placed by Amazon for delivery by 2030. UK-based Arrival has inked a deal with UPS which will involve it supplying 10,000 of its Generation II battery-powered vans to the global parcels giant for use in the UK, Europe and North America by 2024.

Among the established brands active in the sector is Renault. It has an entire suite of battery products including electric versions of Kangoo and Master. First introduced as a 3.1-tonner, Master Z.E is now also available at 3.5 tonnes. The extra 375kg payload capability it provides broadens the vehicle's appeal and potentially makes it a more practical bet for supermarket fleets.

Master Z.E has clearly been developed with last-mile delivery work in mind. Both versions are equipped with a 33kWh battery which gives them a modest quoted range of up to 75 miles between recharges. It takes six hours to recharge the vans using a 7kW wall-box, says Renault.

Also designed for short-haul city and suburban work is the Mercedes-Benz eVito and Volkswagen's eTransporter, which is produced in conjunction with specialist automotive engineer ABT. The vans offer ranges of 92 and 82 miles respectively, say their manufacturers.

Some vehicle makers recognise that while certain van operators want as long a range as possible, others would rather have a smaller, lighter battery with a shorter range, which will give them the ability

Vauxhall's Vivaro-e can cover up to 144 miles when specified with a 50kWh battery



Fiat's E-Ducato 3.5-tonner offers a claimed range of from 125 to 206 miles

It can cover up to 144 miles when specified with a 50kWh battery says the company, increasing to 205 miles if a 75kWh battery is fitted instead. Opt for the smaller-capacity battery and there's a 224kg payload boost. As a member of the PSA Group, Vivaro-e shares the same basic design as Citroen's e-Dispatch and Peugeot's e-Expert.

Fiat Professional is adopting the same tactic with the new E-Ducato 3.5-tonner. It offers a claimed range of from 125 to 206 miles depending on the battery configuration selected. Mercedes-Benz is hoping customers will prefer its e-Sprinter, while MAN is extolling the virtues of its eTGE, a rebadged version of Volkswagen's electric Crafter.

Electric improvements

What is clear amid all the competing claims is that there is an underlying trend for ranges to get longer and longer as battery technology improves. What this will increasingly mean is that there will be no need for businesses to obtain a fleet of electric light commercials with the aim of allocating them solely to last-mile delivery routes.

The vehicles will have the ability to handle longer runs too without the need to be recharged – not London to Manchester and back as yet, but certainly return trips from London to Reading, Slough or Swindon.

Renault is now marketing a Zoe Van, which makes it the first mainstream manufacturer to launch a light commercial in Britain based on a small electric hatchback car. Equipped with a 52kWh lithium-ion battery, it comes with an impressive quoted range of up to 245 miles.

Not available in the UK until spring 2022, the new E-Transit should be able to travel for up to 217 miles before it has to be plugged into a charging point, says Ford.

If users do need to recharge it, then the exercise should hopefully not take too long. Replenish its 67kWh battery using a 115kW DC fast-charger, and the van can reach 80% of its capacity from an initial 15 per cent in 34 minutes, Ford says – more than enough time to eat a sandwich, drink a coffee and get the list of jobs scheduled for the afternoon from a smartphone.

to carry more weight. That makes sense if their typical working day involves driving a dozen miles to somebody's house, parking outside for several hours while they fit wardrobes or install a new bathroom, then driving back home again. Vauxhall is attempting to satisfy both requirements with Vivaro-e.



RIGHT: Renault is now marketing a Zoe Van

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Doorstep challenges

One of the 'success' stories of 2020 has been the rise of the home delivery industry as people have adjusted to buying goods online. **Steve Banner** looks at the effect on the transport sector

“

We're experiencing the biggest boom in online retailing in Britain's history

”

RIGHT: Tesco is one of Mercedes-Benz's biggest light commercial customers

Demand for home deliveries has skyrocketed due to the Covid-19 pandemic and its accompaniments of lockdown, shielding and self-isolation. Supermarket chain Iceland alone has seen a 300 per cent increase in orders over a 12-month period, much of which has coincided with the worst of the coronavirus outbreak. It has recruited more than 3,000 employees to keep up with the massive surge, a mixture of drivers and workers in in-store support teams.

As a consequence, it can now handle up to 750,000 home deliveries a week. “We've been blown away by the demand,” says Chief Customer and Digital Officer, David Devany. Furthermore, Iceland shoppers in London are now able to get their groceries delivered by UberEats. Their order should arrive in no more than 20

minutes. Drivers need vans and Iceland has expanded its delivery fleet by 30 per cent.

Meanwhile, Tesco has more than doubled its online delivery capacity to 1.5 million slots a week and has managed to pick 10 million items in a single day for



the first time. As the pandemic hit, the supermarket chain hired more than 4,000 drivers and an extra 12,000 pickers – and opted to hang on to vehicles that would normally have been disposed of after five years in service. Tesco needed to retain them alongside their new replacements in order to keep up with the unceasing demand.

Tesco's temporary fleet

The desperate need to hire drivers led to Mercedes-Benz lending the retailer 15 Sprinters, which were used to assess new drivers' capabilities. All standard panel vans, the vehicles could not be employed on home delivery work. But they were instead used to evaluate how competent job candidates were behind the wheel.

Tesco did not want to deploy any of its current fleet of home delivery vehicles for the purpose of evaluating new drivers' capabilities because of the current high demand for home deliveries.

The supermarket is one of Mercedes-Benz's biggest light commercial customers. Sprinter

3.5-tonners make up around half of the 5,000-plus vehicles on the Tesco.com delivery fleet.

The last 12 months have seen Mercedes supply 1,105 Sprinter 314CDI chassis cabs to the grocery chain. They have all been equipped with refrigeration systems by Thermo King and insulated bodies by Solomon Commercials.

Away from the aisles

Supermarkets supplying groceries are not the only businesses to have benefited from a boost in online sales during the pandemic. The willingness of consumers to order everything from paperbacks to clothing from a wide variety of websites means that parcel companies are busier than ever.

“We're experiencing the biggest boom in online retailing in Britain's history,” says DPD's UK CEO, Dwain McDonald.

As a consequence, FORS Bronze-accredited DPD has invested a whopping £100m in new vehicles and £60m in 15 new regional depots – 10 more than it had originally planned to open in 2020. It

The willingness of consumers to order everything from paperbacks to clothing from a wide variety of websites means that parcel companies are busier than ever

▶ has also pumped £40m into new technology. All of these developments have been accompanied by the creation of 6,000 jobs for van and truck drivers, warehouse employees, managers and support staff, including vehicle technicians.

A huge expansion in parcels throughput prompted DPD to triple its 2020 order for Mercedes-Benz Actros tractor units to 150, all low-frame-height 4x2 1840 LS nR models with 2.3m StreamSpace cabs powered by 394hp 10.7-litre diesels. Plated for operation at 38 tonnes, they are equipped with Active Drive Assist, MirrorCam cameras instead of conventional exterior mirrors and the latest Active Brake Assist 5 emergency braking system.

Technology benefits

Active Drive Assist manages the truck's speed to keep it a safe distance from any traffic ahead and ensures it remains in the centre of whichever lane it is in. "We think the High Street will bounce back from where things are now, but we have to base our modelling on our conversations with retailers and their projections," McDonald says. "It looks like there will remain a much greater reliance on e-commerce in the future," he continues. "That's going to be our new normal."

Something else that has already become DPD's new normal is a greater reliance on zero and low-emission vehicles. It aims to deploy fleets that fall into that category in 25 of the UK's largest towns and cities by 2025.

The initiative is part of a Europe-wide programme involving 225 urban areas in 20 countries and is based on a delivery model trialled in a number of cities, including London. The programme will involve the deployment of 7,000 new vehicles powered by alternative fuels and the installation of 3,600 charging points.

The company already has over 700 electric vans and light trucks in service on this side of the Channel, including MAN eTGEs, Nissan e-NV200s and Fuso eCanter 7.5-tonners. It means that over 10 per cent of its British fleet is now battery-powered and the vehicles concerned are delivering one million parcels a month between them.

"The feedback from the depots, our drivers and our customers has been fantastic," says McDonald. "We know retail customers want this and the reaction on the doorstep is great when recipients see that their parcel has been delivered emission-free."

Van-tastic news

The seemingly unstoppable expansion in home



delivery has helped keep UK van registrations afloat during some of the toughest months for the economy since 1945.

Last October turned out to be the biggest October on record so far as sales of light commercials were concerned. An impressive 28,753 were registered, according to figures compiled by the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT).

Much of the running was made by 3.5-tonners as home delivery fleets expanded in the run-up to Christmas. Almost 20,500 of the vehicles that found buyers were in the 2.5- to 3.5-tonne weight category.

Perhaps not surprisingly, one of the biggest sellers was Mercedes-Benz Sprinter – the supermarket fleet favourite.

It outsold Ford's Transit and grabbed the number two slot, but was itself comfortably outsold by Ford's Transit Custom.

SMEs show promise

Big businesses are not the only ones to embrace the online revolution. A study of 750 small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) conducted on behalf of rental company Avis Vans found that 25 per cent of them had introduced a delivery option or mobile service to diversify their offering during the first lockdown. Some 49 per cent intended to keep

operating in this way, even when they were able to re-open physical premises.

SMEs that previously ran delivery and mobile services were contemplating beefing up their offer. According to the study, over one-third – 37 per cent – were considering investing in a commercial vehicle, the survey showed – and that included thinking about renting one.

Not everybody can afford to acquire or rent a new van of course. Small businesses and self-employed individuals working as subcontractors to the parcels giants may opt to buy second-hand instead.

Boost in the used market

That may help explain why the used van market is so healthy at the time of writing, with little sign that it is about to slow down. The National Association of Motor Auctions reported that second-hand light commercials were achieving remarkable prices and that they were on track to continue to do so into 2021.

"The shift in consumer shopping activity from physical to online retail and the subsequent increase in deliveries is supporting demand for used vans," says NAMA Head, Louise Wallis.

Many auctions have, of course, been conducted online as a consequence of the pandemic.

Shoreham Vehicle Auctions' Managing Director, Alex Wright, says that trades people such as builders, plumbers and electricians have been buying second-hand alongside small businesses involved in food and parcel deliveries.

"The huge appetite for sub-£10,000 used vans since the first lockdown has meant demand has exceeded supply," he says. "That is why prices have risen, some by 45 per cent to 60 per cent."

"Some pre-Euro 5 models continue to make double their book value," he adds. "Prices across the board are very strong; and this will continue."

ABOVE: A huge expansion in parcels throughput prompted DPD to triple its 2020 order for Mercedes-Benz Actros tractor units to 150

BELOW: Iceland has seen a 300 per cent increase in orders over a 12-month period



On a mission for clean air

Progress is being made in the quest to make our air cleaner, especially in urban environments. **John Kendall** looks at the impact that Clean Air Zones have had – and will have in the future

Good air quality is important for good health. Scientists are in agreement that poor air quality can lead to premature deaths and make life far more difficult for those who suffer from respiratory illness. Research has also linked poor air quality to a range of problems even for those without underlying health issues, including dementia and heart disease.

Given that Greater London has a population larger than a number of small European countries, it is hardly surprising that our capital city has been the focus for air quality legislation, operating an emissions-related charging scheme with the introduction of the Congestion Charge in 2003.

Following that initiative, the London Low Emission Zone (LEZ) was introduced in 2008 with a more targeted approach to vehicles with higher toxic emissions. 2019 ushered in the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ), which replaced the T-charge introduced in 2017. The ULEZ is credited with making sizeable reductions in emissions and reducing the number of older, more polluting vehicles entering the zone.

From October 2021, the ULEZ will be extended to the North and South Circular roads.

Causes of the CAZs

The European Commission launched legal action against the UK Government in 2014 for failing to meet EU limits on air pollution, with nitrogen oxides being a big concern. London is not the only city in the UK with air quality problems. The European Commission's action prompted the UK Government to unveil plans to put pressure on five British cities to

reduce levels of atmospheric nitrogen dioxide back in 2015 via Clean Air Zones (CAZs). Birmingham, Derby, Leeds, Nottingham and Southampton would all face fines unless they took steps to improve air quality.

The date originally set for measures to be introduced was 2020 but, with the blackest of irony, Covid-19 – a disease that affects those with respiratory problems in particular – triggered the first lockdown in March, which dramatically reduced traffic and improved air quality across the country. With the pandemic requiring a vast amount of the government spending available, CAZs in other parts of the country have been put on hold until next year at the earliest.

Bath and Birmingham will be the first to introduce

CAZs from 2021. Bath will introduce its scheme on 15 March, 2021, with Birmingham launching its CAZ on 1 June, 2021. Before considering the other cities that may also follow, it's important to explain more about the schemes that are being proposed.

Know your CAZ

Originally, CAZs targeted buses, HGVs and taxis. A legal challenge changed that and private cars can also be included in schemes. Basically there are two types of CAZ scheme, charging and non-charging, but it doesn't end there. The Government established four different classes of CAZ; Classes A, B, C and D. Class A covers buses, coaches, and private hire vehicles (PHVs), which includes taxis. Class B adds heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) above

3,500kg gross vehicle weight (GVW) to the Class A vehicles, ie the original CAZ targets. Class C includes all Class B vehicles and adds light goods vehicles (LGVs) to the list, ie vans and pickup trucks up to and including 3,500kg GVW. Class D adds private cars to the Class C list to effectively cover the majority of vehicles on the road.

In charging zones, the vehicles that will be exempt from charging for entering the CAZ will be categorised by engine type. So exempt diesel-powered heavy vehicles will include buses, coaches and HGVs that meet the Euro VI emissions standard. It's a similar story for light vehicles. Diesel-powered cars, LGVs and PHVs that meet the Euro 6 standard will also be exempt.

Petrol-powered cars, LGVs and PHVs that meet



“ Given that London has a population larger than some European countries, it is hardly surprising that our capital city has been the focus for air quality legislation ”

▶ the Euro 4 standard will also be exempt. We probably need to clear up any confusion where Euro six is concerned – Euro VI for heavy vehicles and Euro 6 for light vehicles are different standards, although in both cases, reducing oxides of nitrogen for diesel engines is what the standards are designed to do. There is plenty of evidence from the Government’s own air quality monitoring to show that both have been highly effective.

In all cases, there may be other CAZ exemptions, such as for historic vehicles, as well as incentives to help those whose vehicles would attract a charge to change to models that would be exempt.

The Bath experience

Bath has opted for a Class C CAZ after plans to include private cars met with fierce local resistance. Bath draws in many commuters from the surrounding towns and villages and also has no bypass. Those on lower incomes would have been disproportionately affected by a Class D CAZ. Private cars, historic cars and motorcycles will be exempt.

Non-compliant buses, coaches and HGVs will face the highest charges at £100 a day, while LGVs, minibuses and PHVs will all be charged £9 a day. Private HGVs, which may include horse transporters

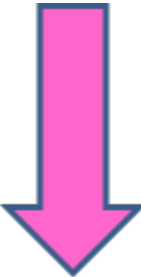
and motorhomes, will have the charge reduced from £100 to £9 a day if registered with Bath and North East Somerset council.

Measures in the Midlands

Birmingham has opted for a Class D CAZ and applies to an area focused on the city centre – bounded by the A4540 ring road. Cars, PHVs, LGVs and minibuses that do not comply will be charged at £8 a day. Non-compliant buses, coaches and HGVs will have to pay £50 a day.

A number of other cities have either dropped plans to introduce charges or may revisit them in the future. This list includes Bolsover and Cardiff, which is planning to introduce non-charging measures to control air pollution. Coventry confirmed earlier in 2020 that it will not introduce a CAZ but would pursue other measures instead. Derby has also dropped plans for a CAZ. The council has expressed a preference for traffic management measures instead.

Dundee has no plans for a CAZ but plans to introduce a LEZ. Plans are under development. Edinburgh is following a similar plan. Hull will not be proceeding with a CAZ and Leeds announced in October that the CAZ planned for the city was no longer required.



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Regions play the waiting game

Some regions have declared their intention to introduce charging but have not yet made final decisions. Aberdeen is consulting on introducing a Low Emissions Zone. It may be introduced soon. Bradford recently announced that it will introduce a charging CAZ in early 2022. Details are not yet finalised, but it will not include private cars.

Brighton is not planning a CAZ but has a ULEZ for buses in central Brighton. All buses must comply with Euro VI emissions by 1 October 2024. Bristol has been carrying out a consultation on a CAZ which closed on 13 December 2020. Cambridge favours a Class D CAZ and has discussed implementation in 2021, but it is not clear if that is going ahead.

Gateshead and Newcastle councils have announced that plans for a Class C CAZ in Newcastle have been delayed. It will now be introduced in late 2021 instead of January 2021.

Glasgow introduced a Low Emission Zone in 2018 and ran an online consultation on extending it earlier in 2020. Phase 2 was due to be introduced from 31 December 2022, applying to all vehicles but this will not be possible under Scottish law. Glasgow City Council plans to publish a timetable as soon as possible.

Greater Manchester plans to introduce a Class C CAZ from Spring 2022. Proposed charges for non-compliant vehicles include £60 a day for buses, coaches and HGVs, £7.50 a day for PHVs and £10 for LGVs, which would enjoy a temporary exemption until 2023.

Newcastle-Under-Lyme is considering a CAZ as an option but expects that charging would be a worst case scenario if other measures are ineffective.

Nottingham City Council dropped its plans for a



CAZ in 2018, proposing to use other measures to control air pollution.

Oxford City Council has a Low Emission Zone and plans to introduce a Zero Emission Zone – a voluntary measure. Implementation has been delayed until summer 2021. A consultation on the zone runs until 17 January 2021. It would include charges set between £2 and £10 a day for non-compliant vehicles between 7.00am and 7.00pm.

Portsmouth plans to introduce a Class B CAZ from Autumn 2021, following a consultation this summer. Charges have yet to be confirmed.

Sheffield's plans for a CAZ are currently on hold and will be reviewed when the council has a greater understanding of the impacts of the pandemic.

Southampton moved away from plans for a charging CAZ in 2019 because it expected to meet its air quality improvement targets in 2020.

York is currently considering a CAZ but is still in the research phase.

“Oxford City Council has a Low Emission Zone and plans to introduce a Zero Emission Zone – a voluntary measure”

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Careless coupling costs lives

Failing to follow standard trailer coupling procedures is all too easy, but the consequences can be terrible. **Richard Simpson** investigates

The articulated semi-trailer is ubiquitous in the transport industry, but its very familiarity means that many drivers and operators are inured to the potential risks that it poses to colleagues and public.

These risks tend to increase in winter – particularly during the run-up to Christmas, where drivers are under greater pressure to get deliveries done, may well be working in darkness and poor weather conditions and using unfamiliar equipment.

It's not just a problem for the inexperienced – familiarity can breed contempt for the veteran driver and some of the 'old school' may not appreciate that modern trailers are infinitely more sophisticated than the 'boxes on wheels' that they grew up with.

This scenario is best illustrated by the importance of the ABS line, the electrical connection between the tractor unit and the trailer's braking system. Old-school trailers had brakes which were actuated by a blast of compressed air from the tractor and the effort was modulated by load-sensing valves, which used suspension deflection to adjust the braking force according to the weight imparted onto the trailer bogie.

Today, things are far more sophisticated. Trailer braking systems are actuated by electronic signals and wheels can be braked to restore stability.

A similar system monitors and adjusts the trailer's air-suspension to help keep things upright. All this and more is controlled by the ABS line – a seven-pin electrical connection, designated ISO 7638.

Other electrical connectors linking tractor to trailer are 24N ISO 1185 (primary electrics) and 24S ISO3731 (secondary electrics). Additionally, there are two air lines – red (emergency/supply) and yellow (service).

Bizarrely, it seems that many drivers, whether by



accident or design, are neglecting to plug in the EBS line when coupling a trailer.

Bridge strike revelations

This first came to light when Richard Owens, Group Marketing Manager at trailer-maker Don-Bur, became involved with a bridge strike investigation involving the company's double-deckers.

They had hit bridges that they should have been able to pass under, had the trailers' suspension not been in the fully-extended position, which is normally set only when the trailer is backed on to a loading bay.

It transpired that the suspension had not returned to ride height during transit, because the ABS line (which, besides commanding the trailer's anti-lock braking system, also controls the trailer's self-

level function via the air-suspension) had not been plugged in.

Bridge strikes were not the only danger. The trailer's brakes will still work without the ABS line being live, via the yellow air-line, but the various support functions that modern trucks depend upon do not, and some of these are legal requirements and/or safety critical.

"The ABS line is an electrical feed that powers the trailer's electronics and air-valve solenoids," Owens points out. "These items enable the trailer suspension to adjust relative to load weight and braking weight shift as well as adjusting back to running height after loading. They power the trailer's roll stability system and adjust braking power to suit the weight imparted on the trailer bogie."

"The signals from the ABS line activate the brakes

The seven-pin ABS plug connects the trailer's braking and suspension systems to the tractor unit

Connecting all four lines is a vital part of the coupling process

▶ faster than the air passing down the yellow line and allow the anti-lock braking system (ABS) to oscillate the braking power to the wheels.”

Poor connections

So, why do drivers appear so reluctant to plug in the ABS when coupling? Sometimes it's simple carelessness, for others it can be poor maintenance or unfortunate ignorance.

A damaged or corroded line or plug may cause the ABS warning light in the tractor unit to become illuminated when the connection is made. If this is reported as a defect by the driver, sometimes unscrupulous managers will blame a (non-existent) 'compatibility issue'.

Unplug the line, the light goes out and all is well – only it's not, of course. The line can also become difficult to plug in if the weather seal on the socket swells, and contact with some well-known household water-dispersant sprays can cause this.

An even simpler reason is that, if it's dark and the various air and electrical lines behind the cab are untidy, it's quite easy to leave the trailer end of the line plugged into the dummy holder on the tractor. With the trailer's lighting powered by different lines, this might not be apparent on doing a walkaround check.

But there are more sinister reasons, including drivers thinking that leaving the line unplugged will

disable the vehicle's tracking system, or that the intervention of the stability control system will slow them down on corners!

The consequences can be horrendous. Even if a bridge strike – due to the trailer running at the wrong height – is unlikely to kill anyone, it is, in the eyes of the Traffic Commissioners, a notifiable offence. As a result, action may well be taken against the licences of the driver involved and his/her employer, to say nothing of the substantial damages that will be claimed by the bridge owner.

A potential fatality caused by a trailer jack-knifing through wheel locking, or rolling because the stability control was not working, would have even more serious legal consequences. It should also be noted that the lack of data gathered by the trailer's electronics will indicate that the EBS was disconnected at the time of the incident.

Sound the alarm

Don-Bur now offers trailers with alarms that will sound if the trailer

is moved with a disconnected line, but Owens reports that he has even seen drivers attempting to disable this when collecting trailers from the company's premises.

EBS lines aside, coupling and dropping trailers becomes more difficult in hours of darkness.

Miss-couplings, where the trailer kingpin over or under shoots the jaws of the tractor's fifth-wheel coupling, are harder to spot.



Four lines connect tractor and trailer. The trailer ABS socket is second from left on this example



Employers can make things easier by ensuring that all tractor units have effective coupling lamps.

But, ultimately, drivers need to crouch down and shine a torch to ensure the pin is in place and the jaws are closed, then complete two 'snatch tests' where the tractor is pulled forward against the trailer's parking brake.

Care also needs to be taken if drivers are expected to climb onto the catwalk to complete the coupling exercise by attaching the air and electrical lines. Some operators specify a system that mounts the trailer connection points on a board that the driver can reach and swing down.

This set-up enables connections to be plugged or unplugged at chest height without the danger of negotiating a step and catwalk that may well be made treacherously slippery by surplus grease ejected from the fifth-wheel. However, it should be noted that hired-in trailers will probably not have

this equipment. These are particularly valuable on trailers with excessive nose lengths (such as front-mounted fridges), which will otherwise require a potentially hazardous split-coupling process to be carried out.

As ever, the three steps to take to mitigate the issues are: preparation (sites and equipment must be suitable for the task in hand); training (drivers must be encouraged to be methodical when undertaking the coupling/uncoupling process, including the application and release of parking brakes at appropriate times) and compliance (steps taken to ensure that all necessary parts of the process are undertaken every time, and not subsumed to laziness or operational convenience).

● More details on safe coupling and trailer procedures can be found at donbur.co.uk/news/correct-coupling-uncoupling-code-of-practice

Bad weather and poor visibility are regular hazards for drivers picking up trailers at the busiest time of the year

Back on the buses

One of the hardest hit markets as a result of the pandemic has been bus and coach.

Steve Banner assesses the state of play and looks for positives in 2021

Honk for Hope supporters include Leeds-based bus and coach insurance broker McCarron Coates

Covid-19 has dealt bus and coach operators a massive hammer blow. Bus travel fell by an astonishing 82.8 per cent across the UK during the first wave of the pandemic and the consequent lockdown according to the latest figures compiled by the Department for Transport. As passengers shielded, self-isolated or worked from home, all areas were affected, the worst being Wales which saw a drop of 87.1 per cent.

Coach operators saw almost all of their trade vanish. Day trips and coach holidays were no longer possible, tourists stopped arriving in the UK and

school services were cancelled too. Their plight triggered the Honk for Hope protest movement. This has involved well-organised convoys of empty coaches converging on London and other towns and cities in an orderly manner, with drivers periodically sounding their horns to draw attention to the sector's plight.

Fighting to be heard

Honk for Hope supporters include Leeds-based bus and coach insurance broker McCarron Coates, which has devised a retro-style postcard under the 'Wish You Could Hear' banner. Coach operators can send it to their MP to highlight their difficulties.

It is an initiative that has won the backing of incoming President of the Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT) and Managing Director of Blackpool Transport, Jane Cole. "I'm delighted to support this campaign as coach operators need urgent assistance," she says.

The roll-out of a Covid-19 vaccine in the coming months should relieve the road passenger transport sector of much of the burden it is shouldering as the economy slowly inches back to normal. However it will take some time for the sector to recover fully and to do so it will need

government support, says the CPT.

It is among other things calling for a £500m Westminster-backed bus recovery partnership scheme to be set up in England. The aim is to support collaboration between operators and local transport authorities which could, for example, lead to new services being started and the introduction of more bus priority measures. Initiatives centred around fares could be supported in order to stimulate bus travel.

Social distancing requirements applied to buses would have to end first, however, says the CPT so they can run at maximum capacity. This situation would only be possible once the pandemic has abated and passenger numbers would have to be on the rise, with the government actively encouraging people to catch the bus again.

North of the border

Scotland is already busy introducing the £500m-plus Bus Partnership Fund. Orchestrated by Transport Scotland, it will support projects such as bus lanes and guided busways.

The Scottish government is also putting £7.4m towards the acquisition of cleaner, greener buses in the first round of the Scottish Ultra Low Emission Bus Scheme. It is backing the roll-out of 41 such vehicles across five successful bids for funding, including one put together by First Glasgow. The operator has been awarded over £4m, which will help finance the acquisition of 22 electric models. Diesel buses will still be around for some time.

In response, Transport Scotland's Bus Emissions Abatement Retrofit scheme has awarded over £3m to First Glasgow to upgrade 165 of its diesel buses to Euro VI.

Business can do nothing whatsoever to benefit the environment if they are unable to stay afloat because of the damage done to them by Covid-19, something that has been recognised by the Northern Ireland Executive.

It is offering local coach firms and privately-owned bus companies grants paid at the rate of £8,000 for the first vehicle and £4,450 for each additional one. The maximum amount a business can receive will be capped at £100,000 under the £19m scheme, which also embraces taxis.

England's zero-emission drive

On the other side of the Irish Sea, Westminster is investing £120m to help fund the roll-out of 4,000 zero-emission buses as part of a green agenda, which involves a ban on sales of new petrol and diesel cars by 2030.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson's agenda makes reference to plans for at least two AEBTs – All Electric Bus Towns – and to the launch of the first truly zero-emission city centre.

The £120m budget is likely to benefit England in particular, where environmentally-friendly single- and double-deckers are already being rolled out in a number of towns and cities.

Birmingham City Council, for example, is in the process of acquiring 20 new double-deckers equipped with hydrogen fuel-cells. Built by Northern Ireland's Wrightbus, they will be operated by National Express West Midlands. The city is introducing a Clean Air Zone in 2021. Aware that local small coach firms may struggle to comply with its requirements, the council has launched a £10m fund to give them a helping hand.

In the South East, Transport for London (TfL) is

The Department for Transport is contributing £1.7m to putting nine electric Yutong single-deckers on to the streets of Leeds

“The roll-out of a Covid-19 vaccine in the coming months should relieve the road passenger transport sector of much of the burden it is shouldering”





Birmingham City Council is in the process of acquiring 20 new double-deckers equipped with hydrogen fuel-cells

introducing a scheme to encourage smaller bus and coach operators to either upgrade or replace their existing vehicles in order to comply with Euro VI. It has also announced that four more routes will switch to being served by electric double-deckers in 2021 as existing contracts with bus companies finish and new ones begin.

While Leeds may have scrapped its CAZ plans, it remains all too aware of the need to ensure its atmosphere remains breathable.

The Department for Transport's Ultra-Low Emission Bus Scheme is contributing £1.7m to a £7.3m programme to put nine electric Yutong E10 10.9m single-deckers onto the city's streets. The E10s are being operated by First Bus in partnership with Leeds City Council and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority.

Battery buses

The charging infrastructure for the new fleet has been installed by Zenobe Energy. Fourteen battery-powered Yutong E12 single-deckers have just joined Newport Transport, thereby creating the first electric bus fleet in Wales. They join another E12 which

has been in service with the operator for a year,

A limited company, all of whose shares are held by Newport City Council, Newport Transport is becoming a rarity. Like Blackpool Transport, it is one of the few local authority owned bus fleets left in the UK.

The Welsh Government has recently announced a £84.6m support package for the principality's bus companies.

It follows a £10m package announced last August.

Says Welsh Deputy Minister for the Economy and Transport, Lee Waters: "We remain committed to providing the necessary support to ensure efficient services in the short, medium and long term. Buses play a vital role in connecting communities and helping people access shops, education, work and leisure."

In the midst of grim times, coach companies that have been criticised and had action taken against them for allowing their vehicles' diesel engines to tick over when stationary to keep air-conditioning systems running may be cheered by an announcement by EminoX.

The emission control specialist has just unveiled a project developed in conjunction with magnetic drive components manufacturer Magnomatics which will enable air-conditioning units to operate without the engine on.

Funded by a grant of almost £300,000 from the Office of Low Emission Vehicles, it will use mild hybrid technology to achieve its target. Once created, tested and proven, the Vaircon package will be manufactured in the UK, says EminoX. "It's got the power to reduce the environmental impact of passenger transport operators dramatically," contends Retrofit and Aftermarket Sales Director, Carlos Vicente. "It will help achieve net-zero emission goals.

"It also demonstrates EminoX's ability to diversify, building on our strengths in exhaust aftertreatment technologies to contribute to emissions reduction across other drivetrain components," he adds.

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Playing the weighting game

Putting more cargo in or on a vehicle than is officially permitted carries a number of risks. **Richard Drinkwater** examines the dangers

Over the past 25 years, SvTech has been at the forefront of vehicle uprating – both Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW) and Gross Train Weights (GTW). It has become increasingly evident over recent years that many more vans and 4x4s are running overloaded, very often with regards to the combination weights. More often than not, this is down to the van or 4x4 being overloaded when towing: people trust in – and use – the brochure's advertised payload of, say, 950kg and then fill up the trailer to its maximum. They then find themselves about 300kg overweight, which means that their stopping distances will be greatly increased, stability reduced (especially under heavy braking) and running gear will be overly taxed. In the eyes of the law, these situations are serious and dangerous offences, and ones that are often committed unknowingly.

The main problem comes from the fact that most drivers do not know what they can tow in combination. If you look at the picture below, you will see that the combination is 5,300kg on a standard Volkswagen Transporter T32, whilst the GVW is 3,200kg.

Many people assume they can go one to one in terms of weight, van to trailer. This is the most extreme loading that you can have and the majority of vans on the market do not allow for that same ratio.

If this Volkswagen van were to be fully laden (at 3,200kg) inside, then the maximum towable would



be 2,100kg not 3200kg, so towing a big 4x4 would probably be out of the question. However, if the van were only to weigh 2,800kg with driver and load, the trailer and contents could weigh 2,500kg and the van would be road legal, and still insured.

It is therefore imperative that drivers know exactly what their van or 4x4 weighs empty and fully loaded – and also what their trailer weighs empty and fully-loaded. The best way to do this is to use a local weighbridge; check the local council website for a list of weighbridges in the vicinity. Otherwise, look for builders' merchants, scrapyards, or timber yards that operate their own weighbridges. For around £5, these weighbridges will often give you a printed overall GVW and will handwrite the individual axle weights on the ticket. You must know these figures to ensure you are operating legally.

Another issue SvTech witnesses regularly is the incorrect towing pack being fitted. These have a 'D' rating and to tow 3,500kg this must be 17.17 or higher. The wheels and tyres also have to be checked. Too often do we see motorhomes, vans, minibuses and 4x4s with spangly alloys that do not even carry the original axle design weight, let alone the uprated axle weights for higher payloads. This scenario would warrant a dangerous driving summons, so care is needed when looking at tyres. Check the load ratings and refer to the manufacturers figures to ensure the vehicle is within the law.



It is imperative that drivers know exactly what their van or 4x4 weighs empty and fully loaded



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There is a five-star rating system – and if your vehicles are below a one-star rating, your company and driver can both be fined. Aspöck has a range of products which can make your vehicle DVS compliant.

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The PreView Side Defender II is a side-mounted radar which can detect and help mitigate side collisions on the motorway and protect Vulnerable Road Users (VRUs) in the city.

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The low speed setting is designed for slow urban environments and passenger-side turns. The sensor can pick up moving cars and bikes and can even detect pedestrians.

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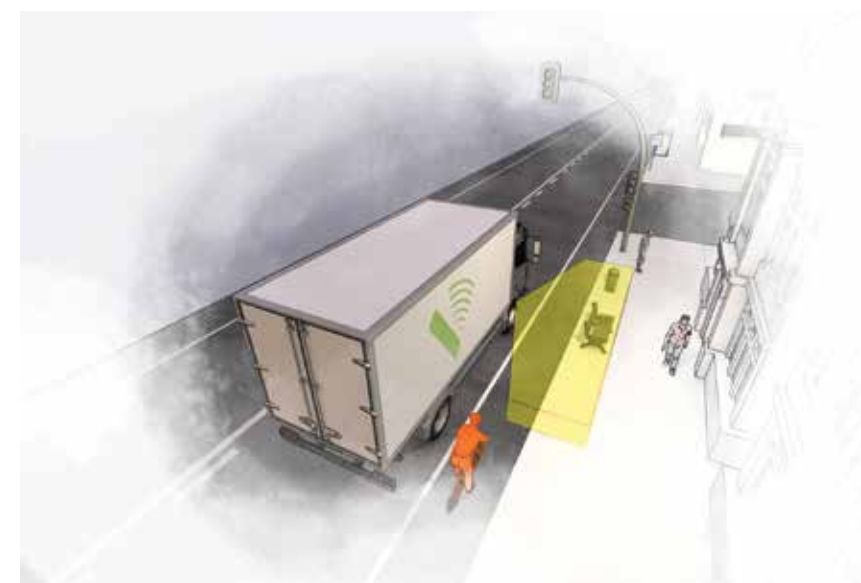
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Our Reversing Radar system scans the area behind the vehicle and provides peace of mind when reversing into the unknown. The sensor can be integrated to the brake system (on trailers) to provide an automatic brake function, therefore helping to reduce collisions, protect pedestrians and reduce vehicle damage. These radars are programmable with different parameters to suit all kind of vehicles.

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- Audible Alarms & Side Sensor Detection
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From 1st March 2021 Fines of up to £550 will be given for HGV s entering London without a DVS permit.

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See the whole picture

With smart dashcams, Lytx provides you and your drivers 360° visibility to help you predict and reduce risky driving incidents and exonerate your drivers if they are falsely accused.

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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 Sport Vision System for Construction Logistic Operators
- Vision and Recording System for Construction Logistic Operators
- High Resolution WDR Cameras
- Compliance systems (LDVS-70 SD or HD)
- CLOCS-70 system (system updated for 2020 with HD cameras)



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