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The dangers of drugs and alcohol in the workplace



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Welcome

As we move into Autumn, there are clear signs of life beginning to get back to normal, post-Covid. This return to reality is not only taking place in everyday life, but also in the work environment. More face-to-face meetings are happening, which is a big relief to those who are not fans of video conferencing technology.

The other big positive that has boosted businesses is the return of trade shows and the chance for industry colleagues to catch up with each other in person.

Events that had to be rescheduled – or, in some cases, cancelled – due to the pandemic have now taken place with tremendous support from exhibitors, visitors and venue staff. One example of this support was ITT Hub – the exhibition and conference for the transport and logistics sector. FORS was there and the stand personnel reported plenty of traffic and some encouraging conversations about FORS, what it offers and how it can help individuals and operators to raise standards. Many visitors to ITT Hub said how happy they were to be out of the office again and engaging with like-minded industry individuals.

But before we get carried away with what some people would probably refer to as the 'old' normal, there are still signs that elements of the 'new' normal are here to stay. For example, FORS has announced that its new FORS Standard will be introduced to members via a series of live webinars. As a reminder of the

news first announced in June, the new Standard will be published on 19 October 2021 with an implementation date of 1 July 2022.

The new FORS Standard – Version 6.0 – was due to be released in 2020, but was delayed because of the pandemic. The revised document has, according to FORS 'been informed through extensive industry contribution', including feedback from FORS members. It has also benefited from technical input from the FORS Standard Review Working Group and the FORS GSAG (Governance and Standards Advisory Group).

The first of the five webinars will take place on the day of publication of the new FORS Standard. The remaining online briefing sessions will run during the remainder of October and November.

Upholding the FORS values set out in the Standard is vital to the success of the scheme. All parties need to pull their weight and ensure that compliance is compulsory.

It is encouraging to see so much support for FORS from the transport community, especially given a very difficult past 18 months.

Enjoy the issue!

Matthew Eisenegger
Editor



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FORS gets drivers back on their bikes

The easing of Covid-19 restrictions means that FORS has resumed funding of its face-to-face training on road risk and the safety of vulnerable road users, including the on-cycle element. The on-cycle sessions are designed to help drivers see life from a cyclist's point of view.

Until recently, FORS was funding the theory element, which was delivered online.

But now face-to-face cycle safety training for HGV and van drivers is back up and running.

The practical part of the training gives drivers first-hand experience of the challenges faced by vulnerable road users.

In addition, it makes truck and van drivers more aware of their responsibilities behind the wheel.

Back in the classroom, there is a session concentrating on how drivers can learn to share the road safely.

The training has been proven to work.

In a recent survey conducted by TTC Group, who is successfully delivering the FORS funded programme in 2021, 96 per cent of drivers said their understanding of issues faced by vulnerable road users has improved as a result of this training. "Many businesses are now beginning to welcome workers back to offices," said Sonia Hayward, FORS Manager.

"Therefore this, coupled with an increased desire to cycle for commuting and leisure, makes road safety training as important as ever."



See more clearly

A solution to help improve forward visibility for truck drivers has been unveiled by Lens-Tech. Available on trucks fitted

with peeper windows, the new product claims to effectively eliminate the blindspot caused by windscreen pillars.

The Hi-Vue lenses, when positioned in portrait format on the windows, can improve the visibility by up to 30°. Therefore,

the driver can see areas that would have previously been hidden.

Les Haigh, CEO of Lens-Tech, said: "It's difficult to alleviate the blind spot created by the pillar and a pedestrian or cyclist hidden behind it is

extraordinarily vulnerable. With the DVS requirements of getting the maximum amount of vision you can from the driver's seat, there's a strong push towards getting those peeper windows into the doors.

"We're discovering that there's even more to be had from a lens in a peeper window, because of the huge blind spot zone behind that pillar, but if you attach our small A5 size lens to the glass in the right place, you'll see round it."



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Report highlights drink/drug driving danger

A report published by Dräger Safety UK has warned of the increased use of drugs and alcohol in the workplace. The medical and safety technology company has assessed the impact of Covid-19, Brexit and workplace culture on health and safety in UK workplaces.

The report concluded that the concern is most prevalent among those managers working in the transport and logistics sector.

Key findings included six in 10 managers (61 per cent) working in transport and logistics saying their organisation is extremely concerned about workplace impairment and resulting

injuries and incidents due to alcohol and drugs. They also said their companies include drug and alcohol abuse in their safety policies.

A further third (32 per cent) are quite concerned but have not yet factored the problem into their safety policies.

While concern for the impact

of prescribed drugs was also highest in the transport and logistics industry, this dropped to less than half (45 per cent) who were extremely concerned and had policies in place.

This means that 55 per cent of the industry is not taking any active steps to curb the growing use of prescription medicines.

Graham Hurst, Spokesperson for Impairment at Dräger Safety UK, said: "The pandemic and the resulting anxiety it has created has undoubtedly shone more of a spotlight on mental health and its consequences, including increased alcohol consumption and drug use.

"Our research has indicated that, perhaps not surprisingly, this is a trend which is keenly felt in the transport and logistics industry.

"However, it is still concerning that more than half of transport and logistics companies do not have policies in place to manage workplace issues caused by prescribed medication."

• **Drugs and alcohol in the workplace – p12**

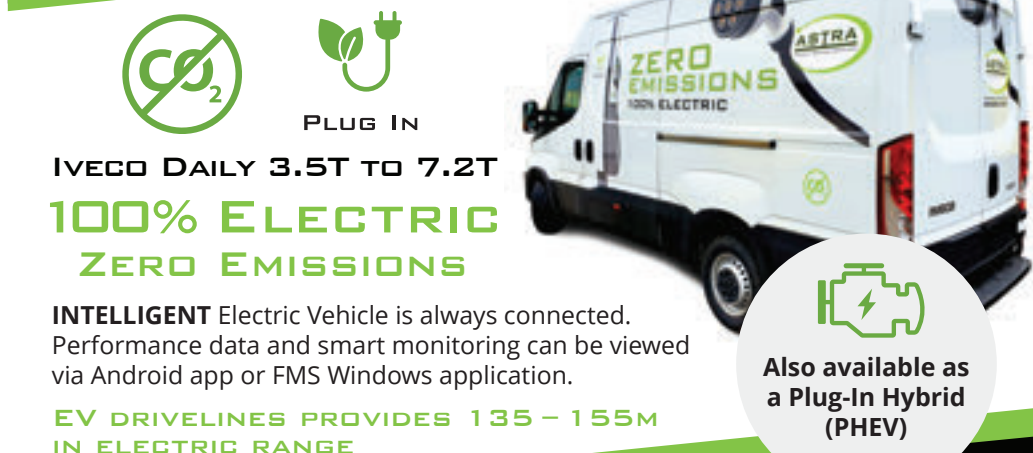


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New Quartix camera tech

FOR Associate Quartix has debuted an updated version of its vehicle camera and tracking map integration technology. The new product has been developed in partnership with Fleet Focus' test API-based system.

The MyFleetLive camera range is now available as part of Quartix's tracking platform. It provides immediate high-resolution event footage as well as the ability to recall historic footage remotely.

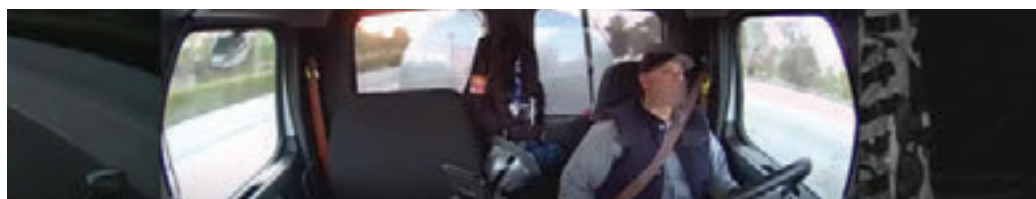
Using AI technology, customers will be notified via video about critical events that are reviewed and categorised within the Quartix platform.

Stay awake

SmartDrive Systems, now part of Omnitrac, has released SmartSense for Inattentive Driving+.

The new product's integrated interior cameras and sensor technology employs AI and computer vision to detect suspected sleep, drowsiness, cell phone usage, smoking, and general inattention.

It alerts drivers to take action



before an incident or other unsafe event occurs.

The system detects and proactively notifies drivers when they are distracted or drowsy, providing immediate in-cab feedback for fleets large and small. Using two cameras built

into a single unit, the solution provides visibility of the cab interior and the driver's face, eyes and hands.

It uses these images to identify drowsiness, sleep, phone use, cigarette use, seatbelt use and other safety-

critical behaviours.

"Inattention is a pandemic and one that has become worse," said Penny Brooks, UK Managing Director at FORS Associate SmartDrive. "The system addresses this problem head-on."

GGR's Gold standard

Lifting products supplier GGR Group is reaping the benefits of FORS Gold accreditation as the business goes from strength to strength. The operator, which had its first FORS Bronze audit in 2013, now works out of two sites, both of which are FORS Gold accredited.

"FORS accreditation has helped GGR Group improve its vehicle standards, enabling us to meet the Direct Vision Standard for London," explained Roger

Millar, GGR, Director of Operations at GGR Group. "It has also assisted us in developing our drivers' practical, theoretical and interactive training, as well as empowering us to put policies and procedures in place to improve our overall performance."

Millar cites the examples of a revised incident policy, a new reporting procedure and driver awareness training that help reduce incidents by 35 per cent, compared with 2018/19.

Kieron Harrison, Transport and Logistics Manager North at GGR Group, added:

"FORS Gold has helped in providing the training, tools and understanding needed to push our company to the forefront in transport and logistics.

"Whether it be the knowledge we obtain from using the FORS Fleet Tools or the information and experience our drivers have gained from completing all the FORS eLearning modules, the experience is invaluable."

FORS - M3

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News

New electric vehicles launched

Debuted at the Soultrans show in 2019, the Goupil G6 utility vehicle (pictured) is now available in the UK. The electric model is viewed as a 'credible, environmental and economical solution' for the sub van market. Designed for urban and suburban areas, the G6 offers – depending on configuration – a payload up to 1,200kg and a load capacity up to 9m³.

The G6 has a top speed of 50mph and a maximum range of 94 miles, according to the WLTP cycle.

Using a 6.6kW charger, the vehicle's 30kW battery can be fully charged in five hours.

Meanwhile, Bradshaw Electric Vehicles has announced the launch of its new PT2500, a fully electric, remote-controlled,

pedestrian-operated tow tractor designed for moving articulated lorry trailers up to 25 tonnes in manufacturing and distribution applications.

The PT2500 is easy to operate and moves trailers safely with exceptional manoeuvrability, negating the need for terminal tractors.

The high-performance electric motors can tow up to 25 tonnes and the hydraulically-powered column lift can hoist up to 6,000 kg. The remote-control functionality provides enhanced flexibility, manoeuvrability and safety and uses limited space.



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FORS member boosts business with TruTac

UK general haulage company Bentons Haulage has improved fleet efficiency and compliance across all areas of its operation using multiple TruTac software products.

The family-run firm, which holds FORS Silver accreditation, is based near Coleshill, Birmingham and has used TruTac's compliance products for over 10 years. However, it only recently added TruFleet maintenance software to manage workshop and vehicle inspection procedures.

"The impact was instant," said Director, Shane Benton. "It was like the missing piece of the puzzle. We reduced vehicle downtime and workshop maintenance administration by over 30 per cent, which



Bentons Haulage Director Shane Benton

is driving performance improvements throughout the entire operation."

Benton's keen interest in technology and using 'Big Data' from integrated systems is delivering on his goals of working smarter and constantly driving growth. The investments in technology, coupled with an entrepreneurial spirit and sheer determination, have seen Bentons Haulage land multiple large contracts and diversify into new areas, at a time when other firms have struggled.

Operating over 100 vehicles

– ranging from 7.5-tonne flatbeds to 44-tonners – the administration requirement is as diverse as the Bentons Haulage fleet itself. According to the boss, it used to be a huge daily challenge, but that is no longer the case.

"The interactive TruFleet system keeps daily checks and all other information together, along with documentation and audit reports for future maintenance bookings," said Benton.

Record-breaking number of Gold and Silver members

FORS has achieved record numbers of FORS Gold and Silver accredited members.

The total number of Gold accredited members reached a new high of 321 on 19 August 2021. In addition, Silver accredited members are at a record 1,650.

"The increased figures mean that more operators are seeing the benefits of progressing to higher levels of FORS accreditation. Specifically, they can now achieve better efficiency, reduced costs and

have more chance of winning contracts. We are delighted to see our membership levels continuing to rise at Silver and Gold level," said John Hix, FORS Director. "Our data and member feedback consistently demonstrate the benefits of FORS and its growing importance in the tendering process.

"We are always evaluating our offering to ensure that members get the very most out of FORS, no matter the size or make-up of their fleet," added Hix.

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Alcohol and drug danger

Driving and operating under the influence are very serious offences that can have major repercussions for the individual as well as the business.

David Whiffin investigates

On 24th March 2015, Andreas Günter Lubitz, a Germanwings co-pilot, deliberately crashed an Airbus A320-211 into the French Alps. The result was the death of himself, the crew and all 144 passengers on board.

The subsequent investigation revealed that prior to the event, Lubitz was suffering from a psychological disorder and was taking prescription drugs. Both of these factors possibly impacted his actions on that day.

No-one will ever really know the full truth behind the tragedy. However, the story serves as a stark reminder that any medical and/or psychological issues being suffered by an individual (including those relating to the abuse/misuse of drugs and/or alcohol) can lead to a catastrophic outcome for all involved.

The exposure to these types of issues (and the risks and consequences of failing to identify problems within an organisation) has increased and



ggers in the workplace

become more relevant over the last 18 months. In one way or another, the Covid-19 pandemic has affected people across the globe, both physically and mentally.

As a result of the effects of the pandemic, many people have struggled to cope with (among other things) stress and depression and have turned to 'maladaptive coping strategies', such as the use/misuse/abuse of drugs and alcohol.

Maladaptive Coping Strategies

A coping strategy is 'an action, a series of actions, or a thought process used in meeting a stressful or unpleasant situation or in modifying one's reaction to such a situation' (*American Association of Psychology*). We all use coping strategies much of the time without being conscious of it – whether it be going for a walk, talking with friends, doing yoga or going shopping.

Many of us may even add a little chocolate bar when paying for fuel at the garage. These actions (less so the chocolate bar) would be classed as positive coping strategies and should be encouraged.

A maladaptive coping strategy can be defined as 'the shutting down of feelings to provide relief from stress and anxiety' (*Enns et al., 2018*) and is essentially a manifestation of poor stress management. This shutting down of emotions can present in many forms, but most commonly we would see the use of a substance, gambling or perhaps even an online shopping addiction. Within the workplace, most maladaptive coping strategies result in problems such as presenteeism and reduced concentration, or absenteeism/increased sickness.

The effect on a business

Quite naturally, these scenarios can cause an organisation to ask a number of questions. For



example: What impact has the last 18 months had on staff wellbeing? Have any issues with drugs and alcohol use/misuse/abuse been identified?

Has there been any impact on staff operational effectiveness (or even the collective operational effectiveness of the organisation)?

In addition, there may be questions about the impact on the levels of absenteeism/sickness within the workforce, and what has been the associated impact on and cost to the organisation?

Most importantly, what impact does this all have on health and safety within the organisation?

The aviation industry has taken positive steps to address mental health, wellbeing and psychoactive substance management in the wake of the Germanwings incident. Meanwhile, it is equally important for other industries and organisations to take stock and to recognise the challenges that come with identifying and managing these issues.

Regardless of whether people are dealing with specific mental health issues and maladaptive coping strategies, the occasional lack of judgement, ignorance on the effects of a mid-week social evening out or someone 'experimenting', the effects of drugs and alcohol on the performance of an employee are exactly the same. Properly framing

“It is important for industries to take stock and to recognise the challenges that come with identifying and managing these issues”



Firms should be ensuring that their workforce is educated on the reasons why they shouldn't consume psychoactive substances at work



▶ substance misuse in the workplace allows us as a professional, safety-focused community to address the challenges and begin to take steps in managing the issues.

Organisations should be looking at the specific policies and programmes that they are deploying.

They should also be ensuring that their workforce is well educated on the reasons why they shouldn't consume psychoactive substances (drugs that affect mental processes) at work and the impact it can have on their health and performance, especially if they are performing a safety critical role.

Here to help

For any impairment (drugs and alcohol) management programme to be successful, it should be framed as a complementary, employee-centric safety net, rather than an oppressive programme to be feared. We all have a vested interest in getting this right, with family, friends and colleagues all out on the roads. FORS Associate OdiliaClark recently performed a programme of testing in an organisation that had initially been fearful of rolling out such a programme and the response from the workforce was overwhelmingly positive, with comments such as 'our children walk to school in these areas' being common.

OdiliaClark can help review and draft a workplace's drugs and alcohol policy and implement a programme of testing that is both robust and fair.

OdiliaClark can also help consider how to support and recover any employees that have been identified (or self-referred) with an issue, getting



them back into the workplace (where appropriate) whilst keeping everyone safe and keeping their operations running smoothly.

• **David Whiffin is the Managing Director at OdiliaClark. He will be regularly contributing to The Standard, focusing on drugs and alcohol in the workplace**

Q and A with drink and drug test kit distributor D-Tec

Q. As a fleet operator, how can I prevent drug driving within my organisation?

A. First and foremost, ensure you have a robust and active drug and alcohol policy in place. This sets an expectation for your workforce, most importantly your policy should be clear and not open to interpretation. A policy acts as a credible deterrent and is a great first step in

keeping drugs out of your organisation.

• **Tip: Our team can review your policy and advise on areas of improvement to ensure compliance.**

Q. We are a small business; how can we tackle it?

A. We appreciate margins are often tight for hauliers and finding funds for drug and alcohol screening might feel like an

expense you cannot prioritise. We have packages available for SMEs operating small to medium sized fleets who want to ensure they are managing the risk. Our 'Stand Down' package is ideal for those looking to implement drug and alcohol screening with limited funding available.

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“

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”

Just off the A14, in the heart of North Northamptonshire, the busy market town of Kettering has a proud industrial past.

It also boasts a thriving manufacturing future, if the growth of access platform specialist CPL is anything to go by. “We’re working pretty much at capacity here, the car park is always full,” explains Paul Murphy, Managing Director, CPL.

Founded in 2011 by Murphy and his wife Michela, “with a handful of employees and a lot of passion”, CPL has helped transform the vehicle-mounted access platform market in the UK. “When we started out, few thought the market was big enough for another access platform manufacturer,” explains Murphy. “But we managed to convince some utility companies to try the CPL pick-up mobile elevated work platform (MEWP) – and it’s now one of the best-selling access platforms in the UK.”

Today, the company employs more than 70 people, with three manufacturing facilities in the UK spanning over 31,000 sq ft, including fabrication/welding and powder coating facilities, along with a full design and engineering suite. The finishing and checking service means platforms can go from the workshop straight into service. Base units are built to customer requirements, with finishing options that range from colour changes and livery to lockers and accessories.

Covering all bases

“We’re a one-stop shop for vehicle-mounted access equipment,” states Murphy. “We offer one of the

widest ranges on the market, from small 4x4 units and van mounts to insulated platforms and machines with 90m working heights. But it’s our expertise, our dedication to quality and our proactive team that makes the difference,” he adds

“As we’re now the main dealer for Palfinger





Platforms, our recently-purchased fourth manufacturing site will be used as our service and maintenance centre for all types of equipment, including truck-mounted units up to 90m,” he adds.

Over the last 10 years, CPL has partnered strategically with global businesses including

Palfinger, Terex and, most recently, Klubb Group, which acquired 75 per cent of CPL in 2018.

“Back in 2018, we didn’t have much of a presence in the van mount sector, but the quality of Klubb van-mounted lifts – combined with our strong reputation – has seen us make huge increases in



Paul Murphy,
Managing Director,
CPL

▶ van MEWP sales,” says Murphy. “We have worked closely with Renault Trucks over the last four years to become an approved converter, which gives our customers the peace of mind of a manufacturer’s warranty and has allowed us to secure full vehicle type approval on the Renault Trucks Master at 3.5 and 4.5 tonnes. The Master is highly versatile in its payload capabilities, manoeuvrability and levels of driver comfort.”

Going above and beyond

According to Grahame Neagus, Head of LCV at Renault Trucks, CPL is leading the way with its Cutaway body design for the elevated platform market. In addition, it impresses with its drive to deliver cleaner, quieter, more sustainable solutions for customers, embracing electromobility.

“Our Red Edition Master is available as a diesel as well as in fully electric Renault Trucks Master Z.E form,” he reveals.

“When combined with CPL’s ‘Green Pack’ electric boom, we can provide a totally electric MEWP solution at 3,100kg and 3,500kg, improving air quality and reducing noise pollution in our cities and sensitive residential areas.”

This commitment to sustainable solutions has found favour with operators that have the highest

environmental ambitions, including Openreach.

The broadband provider has taken delivery of 109 4.5-tonne Renault Truck Master RWD Cutaway vans with Green Packs. Powered by the electric boom pack rather than the engine PTO, the Klubb KL32 Electric Aerial Platform has an impressive working height of 12.3m and working outreach of 6.9m.


“With no outriggers and a safe working load of 120kg in the basket, this is a one-man operation conversion that reduces set up time and allows for silent operation of the platform, ideal for night work,” says Murphy.

The new Masters join Openreach’s roll-out of Ultrafast Full Fibre Broadband across the UK, supporting the UK Government target of making gigabit-capable broadband available to 85 per cent of the country by 2025.

After 10 successful years of CPL, Murphy is certainly not resting on his laurels.

“We’ve come a long way, we’re growing fast, but it is managed growth, with a commitment to excellence running through everything we do,” he maintains.


“This is skilled work, and the team is trained to maintain exacting quality standards. We have always invested in people and create opportunities for career progression within the business.”



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Dealing with the driver shortage

The UK transport sector is currently consuming drivers at an unsustainable rate. Rather than increasing the supply of recruits, the industry must instead seek to nurture the drivers it has and make itself an attractive place to work. **By Richard Simpson**

Given the current driver shortage, firm action clearly needs to be taken. Transport must improve its reputation among working people and recover to the relatively high status it held back in the 1970s and 1980s. Back then, adventurous and resourceful young men became truck drivers in the hope of an exciting and lucrative life on the Middle-East run. In addition, drivers working in sectors such as petroleum

and car transportation earned salaries that were roughly on a par with those commanded by mid-rank management and fairly represented the responsibilities of their jobs. The only way to get back to those days is by making drastic improvements in terms and conditions. Issues to be addressed include excessive hours, low hourly wages, poor roadside facilities and excessive remote supervision via telematics, including the



imposition of arbitrary and unsustainable targets and standards.

Businesses face shortages of competent workers across the economy. This shortage extends far beyond transport and logistics – to essential sectors such as farming and food production, construction and health and social care.

In part, this shortage can be attributed to an objective prevalent in the years from Prime Minister to-be Tony Blair's "education, education, education" promise of 1997 to the economic crisis of 2008. This period triggered an increasing emphasis on creating a workforce for the 'knowledge economy' complete with a stated ambition of sending half of all school-leavers to university.

The problem with this is that the other half are then left behind. Unable to secure a place at university, they are likely to feel doomed to non-careers in the gig economy and will find it difficult to engage seriously with the world of work. The development of practical skills is neglected in the education

system and devalued in society, until such time as society needs a plumber, an electrician, a care-assistant or goods delivered.

National emergency?

It's then that all hell breaks loose. Demands come thick and fast, ranging from calling in the army to move 'vital supplies' (it's a national crisis when a major restaurant chain runs out of chicken!), to inviting back all the Eastern Europeans who left the country after Brexit.

The first solution is patently absurd. If called upon, the army will provide drivers. But most of those are likely to come from the reserve or territorial forces – and will be called up from their civilian occupation of... truck driving! Regular army drivers, trained in the armed forces, are unlikely to be familiar with the realities of driving civilian trucks in a commercial environment.

For a start, they will not have the Certificate of Professional Competence that is necessary to do the job. Most will have only driven rigid trucks, when the workhorse of logistics is the 44-tonne artic.

It would be wrong to assume that the shortage of professional drivers in the UK is unique to this country. Nor can it be cured by any kind of short-term fix, including importing drivers from elsewhere or generating a sudden influx of new recruits from demographics currently under-represented in the UK driver force.

As far back as 2019, the International Road Transport Union (IRU), an employer's body, found driver shortages spreading across Europe, with a 21 per cent shortfall reported.

Covid saw a momentary easing, with the figure falling to just seven per cent. But economic recovery is anticipated to raise this to 17 per cent before the end of the year as the economy recovers. So, there is no pool of European drivers desperate to return to the UK.

Transport chiefs cited a lack of qualified drivers as the main reason for the shortage, followed by poor working conditions (further exacerbated by the pandemic) and difficulties in attracting women and young people to the profession. So, no different to the UK.

The Brexit effect

The UK is no longer a particularly attractive place for Europeans to work. The post-Brexit decline of the Pound means that salary remitted 'home' is worth less, Inland Revenue reforms (IR35) mean that income tax cannot be avoided and housing

“Transport chiefs cite a lack of qualified drivers as the main reason for the shortage, followed by poor working conditions”

Few truck drivers start the day knowing when they will finish and many set out for work on a Sunday not knowing if they will see home again before Friday

► costs have risen steeply. Plus, many report that Brexit campaigns made the UK a less welcoming place.

Globally, truck driving has become a job less attractive to young people. IRU reports that the truck driver demographic is ageing even as the global population becomes younger and the proportion of drivers under the age of 25 is now down to just five per cent. Financial and legal barriers to young people include higher insurance costs for employers and licensing laws in many countries that prevent entry to the profession until the age of 21 – by which time potential employees will be working elsewhere.

In the UK, there is evidence of chronic wastage of the young people who do invest the time and money to acquire a vocational licence, although they can do so from the age of 18.

Figures published in a report from a ‘think tank’ convened by employment agency Driver Require show a stark picture.

In the five years before the Covid disruption started, over 30,000 drivers were passing their LGV tests each year, more than balancing the maximum of 10,000 who were reaching retirement. Yet the number of people actually employed as truck drivers remained constant at 300,000. So, seven per cent of all truck drivers each year elected to go and do something else before retirement. There was also a pool of 600,000 LGV licence holders who did not drive trucks for a living.

Given that many of the licence holders will have invested thousands of pounds of their own cash in licence acquisition, that’s a pretty damning indictment of the ability of the UK transport sector to retain and manage its staff.

Do you want to be a driver?

There are a few reasons why truck driving is so unattractive. The first is that what would be anti-social hours in any other profession are standard. A 10-hour day is regarded as short by most drivers. Early starts, late finishes, weekends and nights are all normal. Not only are the hours long, they are also unpredictable.

Few truck drivers start the day knowing when they will finish and many set out for work on a Sunday or Monday not knowing if they will see home again before Friday or Saturday.

It’s pretty much always been this way in transport, but the slow erosion of wages means that the traditional compensations such as ‘dark’ and ‘night out’ money have been consolidated into increasingly unattractive packages. Simultaneously, drivers are

micro-managed by intrusive telematics systems.

In terms of facilities, expectations of comfort and cleanliness have risen steadily since the Second World War. Truck cabs now offer comparatively high levels of living space and comfort. But open the cab door, and what is available for truck drivers has declined. Roadside facilities are fewer, more dispersed, more expensive, lower quality and more crime-ridden than ever.

It’s debatable as to whether improving the space and comfort of truck cabs has helped or hindered matters. The rise of the high-roof sleeper-cab was driven by the needs of the long-haul market, but is also seen as mitigation in some circles for keeping drivers ‘out’ for longer than ever before, with operational convenience taking precedence over human welfare.

Marriage unattractive

Even marriage to a truck driver is now unattractive. In most parts of the UK, two salaries are now required to maintain a family home. This means that domestic duties such as school runs and child care are shared. Traditional male-dominated industries such as construction increasingly operate ‘family-friendly’ hours to enable this, but road transport cannot until there is total reform of the hours culture. An alternative would be to increase drivers’ wages by at least 100 per cent – sufficient to house and raise a whole family.

In truth, the latter might be perfectly achievable. Even though drivers’ wages are one of the largest costs in vehicle operation, when allocated to the load they are not that high. What is the actual unit cost of transporting a tin of beans from cannery to supermarket shelf and what proportion of that cost is employing a driver?

Faced with the cost of paying perhaps a penny more or ‘no beans’, which would the consumer choose? Even with a driver shortage, too many on-line retailers still offer ‘free shipping’, indicating that transport is undersold.

The forthcoming decarbonisation of road freight presents a challenge and an opportunity. Electric trucks require daily recharging, where previously trucks ran all week on a tank of diesel. Will the constraint of the nightly depot recharge also force a change in culture where loads in trailers or demount bodies are relayed by one truck after another across the country, and drivers can be home in time to pick the kids up from school and cook their tea?

Who knows if the industry will have the wit to seize this opportunity?

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DVSA uses new technology to detect tyre and weight offences

One in 12 flat tyres and 5,000 overweight vans are detected in one month. **John Clark** reports

New technology used in a trial by the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) found one in 12 LCV tyres were underinflated and identified 5,000 overweight vehicles a month. Plans are now being drawn up for a nationwide rollout of the scheme, which was funded by a Highways England innovation fund.

Highways England's commercial vehicle incident prevention team (CVIPT) backed the pilot of the WheelRight quartz sensor system at Keele Services on the M6 before running year-long trials with John Lewis at Milton Keynes, AW Jenkinson Transport at Penrith and the DVSA check site at Cuerden, on the M62.

The system comprises a set of high-intensity strobe lights, all-weather cameras and drive-over pressure instruments – all collecting data which allows for adjustments to be made to ensure that tyres are compliant with safety standards.

Instant results

This data is analysed to provide results instantly

and reports include: tyre pressures (pass or fail based on predetermined levels), tread depths (pass or fail based on specified levels), tyre temperatures (early identification of problem tyres or wheels), tyre condition (via a 360° photographic image of the tread) and weigh in motion data/axle weights.

Thanks in part to the trial, the CVIPT team received the Highways England chairman's award and the excellence in safety innovation award.

The team was one of 30 winners rewarded at the third Highways England awards, designed to recognise activities which further the company's imperatives of safety, customer service and delivery. This year the award ceremony was held online.

Efforts recognised

Individuals and teams from within Highways England as well as its supply chain partners were among those recognised in the awards. Highways England chief highway engineer, Mike Wilson, said: "We are constantly looking for ways to ensure everyone who travels or works on our network gets

home safe and well and CVIPT can be proud of the work they are doing to help us achieve this.

"The awards that the team have won not only endorse their work, but also the companies and partners help to bring forward the ground-breaking innovations employed to embed improved safety in the commercial vehicle sector."

DVSA's director of enforcement, Marian Kitson, added:

"We're pleased that vehicle safety has been recognised in this way and that DVSA and Highways England continue to work in partnership exploring new and innovative ways of ensuring the compliant operation of commercial vehicles on the roads network."

The team was one of 30 winners rewarded at the third Highways England awards





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More safety features agreed for new smart motorways

No new 'all-lane running' roads will be allowed to open without extra technology. By **John Clark**

“All road journeys involve risk, but the chance of death on smart motorways is less than on any other major road”

Following the shocking revelations recently about the dangers of so-called smart motorways, the Government has announced that more safety measures will be put in place before any more such motorways are built.

It says safety improvements will be fast tracked and no new 'all-lane running' roads will be allowed to open without radar technology to detect stopped cars. The radar technology has been trialled on the M25 to detect stationary vehicles and it has been introduced to stretches of the M3 and M20 over the past 12 months. This technology is currently being installed on the M1.

Nick Harris, Chief Executive at Highways England, said that going forward, it will ensure “every new section of smart motorway has this technology in place when it opens”.

Highways England had already committed to ensuring the system was fitted on all-lane running (ALR) smart motorways by March 2023. It has now committed to complete that work six months early, by the end of September 2022.

It has also pledged to upgrade special cameras 10 months earlier than planned, so that they can be used to spot and prosecute motorists ignoring red X signs and illegally driving down closed lanes.

Furthermore, it says it will install around 1,000 additional approach signs six months earlier than planned.

Work to update The Highway Code to provide more guidance about driving on smart motorways will also be brought forward.

Highways England, which manages the country's strategic road network, has published a first-year progress report on smart motorways, setting out the headway it has made against an action plan published last year to boost safety.

The report claims all lane running motorways – which have no hard shoulder and feature emergency refuge areas – are still safer than other major roads.

Other roads more dangerous

Drivers on a conventional motorway are 33 per cent more likely to be involved in a fatal collision than drivers on a smart motorway, it says.

In the report's foreward, Harris argued: “All road journeys involve risk, but the chance of death on smart motorways is less than on any other major road. It is less than on conventional motorways and it is certainly far less than on any strategic road network A-road.”

Smart motorways, which use technology to maintain the flow of traffic and give information on overhead gantries, have existed in England since 2002. The all lane running version – which involves opening the hard shoulder permanently to drivers – began in 2014. The number of people killed on motorways without hard shoulders increased each year from 2015 to 2019 and totalled 39 deaths. In England, there were 1,489 fatal casualties in 2019 with 1,279 (86 per cent) of them taking place outside of the strategic road network.

Out of the 210 (14 per cent) fatalities on the strategic road network, 125 (8 per cent) took place on A-roads and 85 (6 per cent) on motorways.

Out of the total fatalities in England in 2019, 15 (1 per cent) took place on motorways without a permanent hard shoulder in comparison to 70 (5 per cent) on motorways with a permanent, conventional hard shoulder.





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When vans deviate from diesel

The push towards hybrid and electric vehicles continues and manufacturers are responding with a range of alternatives to pure ICE-powered vans. **By Steve Banner**

“

There's a fear that running heavily-laden on a windy winter's night with the lights and heater on will shorten the claimed range

”

Electric vans are boasting ever-longer ranges between battery recharges. For example, Fiat Professional's new E-Ducato is said to be good for up to 230 miles when specifying the 79kWh battery pack. Even those opting for the 47kWh pack instead will still be able to achieve up to 146 miles, the manufacturer says. That's more than sufficient for users on stop-start delivery work in congested city centres.

Some businesses remain wary of opting for electric models nevertheless, because of concerns about range anxiety. There's a fear that running heavily-laden on a windy winter's night with the lights and heater on will shorten the claimed range dramatically. With some manufacturers' products, they may have a point.

None of the vehicle manufacturers have yet been able to produce an electric light commercial that can tackle really long-distance runs. London to Carlisle, for example, is a distance of 317 miles and will require a recharge somewhere on the journey.

Rapid recharging

Admittedly, electric vans can be recharged more rapidly than was once the case. Vauxhall states that using a 100kW fast-charger can provide its new Combo-e with 80 per cent of its maximum battery capacity in just 30 minutes.

That pre-supposes that users can find a charger to plug it into when they are half-way through a trip – one that is not being used by somebody else



and that actually works. Also, while getting back four-fifths of the battery's strength in half-an-hour is impressive, it only takes a few minutes to fill up a diesel van's fuel tank.

Faced with these dilemmas, some businesses are casting around for vans that, though they may not be fully zero-emission, possess at least some environmental kudos.

Hope for hybrids

Toyota believes it may have at least part of the answer with the surprise launch of a hybrid petrol-electric car-derived van based on the five-door Corolla Touring Sports 1.8 Hybrid. To be assembled at the company's plant in Burnaston, Derbyshire, the Corolla Commercial is scheduled to go on sale next summer.

It either runs solely on zero-emission battery power



or on a combination of petrol and electric. Its 'self-charging' hybrid system means there is no need to go to the bother of plugging it in and the presence of a petrol engine means range is not an issue.

"Corolla Commercial is being introduced as the consequence of feedback from our customers," says Toyota Light Commercial Vehicle Manager, Gareth Matthews. "They've been pointing out to us that we're the hybrid leaders in the car market, so why don't we bring in a hybrid van?"

Toyota has yet to disclose payload capacity or load cube figures at the time of writing, but a guesstimate would suggest roughly 500kg to 550kg for the former and around 1.7cu m to 1.8cu m for the latter. Braked towing capacity is a provisional 750kg, falling to 450kg for those hauling an unbraked trailer.

Toyota also markets electric derivatives of its

Proace City and Proace vans. The former is a rebadged version of the electric Combo/Peugeot Partner/Citroen Berlingo, the latter is a rebadged variant of the battery-powered Vauxhall Vivaro/Peugeot Expert/Citroen Dispatch.

Taxi-based van

Another British-built – Coventry in this case – vehicle is the LEVC (London Electric Vehicle Company) range-extended 2.9-tonne VN5 van.

Derived from LEVC's TX taxi, it can travel for just over 60 miles on battery power alone, says the Chinese-owned maker. This range figure increasing to about 300 miles when its 1.5-litre three-cylinder petrol-fuelled onboard generator kicks in.

It should be noted that this is all it is; a generator. It is not connected to the vehicle's driven wheels, which are propelled solely by the electric motor.

Working with Michelin subsidiary Symbio, Renault has developed versions of its electric Master Z.E equipped with a 10kW fuel cell



ABOVE: Ford's battery-electric E-Transit range

▶ Ford has heralded its commitment to battery-electric vans with E-Transit. At the same time, however, it is also marketing plug-in hybrid and mild hybrid versions of some of its light commercial models.

Hope for hydrogen on the highways?

The difficulty, however, with any vehicle that is not driven solely by batteries is that it cannot be viewed as completely zero-emission – unless it happens to be powered by a hydrogen fuel cell instead. The only emission fuel cells produce is harmless water vapour.

Several manufacturers are busy coming up with light commercials fitted with hydrogen fuel cells, including Renault. Working with Michelin subsidiary Symbio, it has developed versions of its electric Kangoo Z.E and Master Z.E equipped with a 10kW

fuel cell that is used as a range extender.

In Kangoo Z.E's case, the range claimed is lengthened from 144 miles on battery power only to 231 miles. As far as Master Z.E is concerned the figures are 75 miles and 219 miles respectively.

Not to be outdone, Vauxhall has come up with a hydrogen fuel cell Vivaro which it says offers a 249-mile range.

It, too, is fitted with a battery, but in this case it is there to offer a sporting chance of getting back to base if drivers cannot locate a hydrogen dispenser.

Vivaro-e Hydrogen can travel for 31 miles solely on battery power, and its 10.5kWh lithium-ion battery can be plugged into the mains if needs be.

It also cuts in to deliver a bit more punch if drivers are accelerating away from the traffic lights or overtaking another vehicle, and enables regenerative braking.

The 45kW fuel cell sits under the bonnet, while the three carbon-fibre hydrogen cylinders are mounted under the load bed.

BELOW: the VN5 van can travel for just over 60 miles on battery power alone



Decisions to be made

Vivaro-E Hydrogen should be available on this side of the Channel by early 2023. Renault had yet to confirm if and when its fuel cell models would be launched in Britain at the time of writing.

The maximum ranges claimed for these fuel cell vehicles are not that far ahead of those offered by the latest generation of purely-electric light commercials – and may even be slightly behind them in one or two cases.

The advantage they have, however, is that refuelling with hydrogen can be done quickly. Renault says the task can be completed in just five to 10 minutes so far as its vans are concerned, while Vauxhall reckons that Vivaro-e Hydrogen can be replenished in just three minutes.

As indicated earlier, the difficulty as things stand



is finding somewhere with hydrogen refuelling facilities.

Production problems

A further concern is how the hydrogen is produced. The process requires a lot of electricity and the environmental argument in hydrogen's favour is liable to fall flat on its face if the electricity produced is generated by a gas- or coal-fired power station.

They are challenges recognised by, among others, Jo Bamford. Son of JCB chairman Lord Bamford and owner of Northern Ireland bus manufacturer Wrightbus, he has been instrumental in setting up HYCAP in conjunction with investment partnership

Vedra Partners. It is a hydrogen investment fund which has its sights set on raising £1 billion.

The capital already stands at over £200m after the first round of investment and will be injected largely into UK businesses. The fund's focus is on speeding up the production and supply of green hydrogen – ie hydrogen produced using renewables, creating jobs and contributing to the British government's net zero targets.

"It is our belief that hydrogen holds the key to reducing emissions and there is a growing sense of urgency to act now," says Bamford. "We, as a country, can be global leaders in the production and supply of hydrogen; an economy predicted to be worth \$2.5 trillion in revenues by 2050."



ABOVE:
the Corolla
Commercial is
scheduled to
go on sale next
summer



LEFT: Vivaro-E
Hydrogen
should be
available on
this side of the
Channel by
early 2023

Driving the alternative fuels movement

As a substitute to diesel, liquified natural gas (LNG) is proving a popular choice among truck operators. **Dan Jones** explains more



“The view that gas was just for organisations investing in a bit of greenwash is well and truly out of the window”

Projections suggest as many as 39,000 gas trucks could be in operation by 2027 in the UK. The move is being driven by an intense pressure on the industry to reduce its carbon footprint, specifically within the government's transport decarbonisation plan. The document outlined ambitions to phase out the sale of new diesel and petrol heavy goods vehicles by 2040.

Manufacturers' development plans for the electric and fuel cell trucks of tomorrow might be gathering pace right now, but the reality is that, for regional and long-distance applications, gas remains the only genuine alternative to diesel currently available.

“The view that gas was just for organisations investing in a bit of greenwash is well and truly out of the window,” says James Westcott, Chief Commercial Officer of Gasrec, which supplies more than half of the natural gas currently used by the road transport sector.

“These companies are now making investments in gas vehicles because they know they work. They've done the hard yards and run the trials – the vehicles have got the fleet deployment and infrastructure around them. And this means smaller operators can start to benefit from that and join them too.”

The fact that 18 per cent of the UK's road transport

emissions comes from HGVs, yet they represent just one per cent of vehicles on the road, means that by swapping diesel trucks for gas equivalents, the industry can have a disproportionately large effect on CO₂ reduction within a rapid timeframe.

“To put this in perspective, if we replace 18,000 diesel-powered trucks with equivalent models running on Bio-LNG (liquified natural gas), this has the same impact as taking 525,000 petrol and diesel-powered cars off our roads and replacing them with electric cars,” reasons Westcott. “When you look at it this way, the impact we can collectively have as an industry is huge.”



Early adopters

Key to the healthy demand for gas vehicles has been availability of factory-built products from Iveco, Scania and Volvo – including, most notably, 6x2 tractors since mid-2018.

FORS Bronze member Gregory Distribution is one operator taking full advantage. The south-west logistics company has ambitious plans to cut its greenhouse gas emissions by 4.2 per cent annually and transition at least five per cent of its fleet away from diesel to alternative fuels every year.

A crucial part of this strategy is the company's plans to switch large swathes of its long-haul

operations away from diesel to Bio-LNG.

"We put our first LNG trucks on the road in September 2019 and the reduction in carbon emissions have been clear to see," says Paul Jefferson, Group Legal, Risk and Sustainability Director at Gregory Distribution. "The technology has come on leaps and bounds in the past 12-18 months and the feedback from the drivers of our Volvo trucks has been hugely positive."

That initial success has led the firm to put the foot on the gas – so to speak – and continue its drive towards a more sustainable and environmentally-friendly operation by installing its first Bio-LNG



Fleets have been surprised by how straightforward the process of switching fuels has been

refuelling station. Owned and operated by Gasrec, the skid-mounted facility is quick to deploy and an ideal solution for fleets exploring the option of Bio-LNG.

It has been installed at Gregory's Cullompton depot, helping to fuel the business' current fleet of 20 Volvo FH LNGs, with more soon to follow.



Plans are already in place with Gasrec to build a four-bay station, dispensing Bio-LNG and Bio-CNG (compressed natural gas), which will replace the facility they are currently using.

"The one challenge we have faced with LNG has been the infrastructure. But now, with the help of Gasrec, we are taking control of our destiny. It's a major step forward," adds Jefferson.

Straightforward switch

"All of the fleets we work with have been surprised by how straightforward the process of switching fuels has been," says Westcott.

"Yes, there are challenges to keep pace with demand, but we are focused on ensuring the infrastructure and supply line is there for every operator in the country that wants to make the move to Bio-LNG."

The big question being posed by fleets is whether gas is still the answer when manufacturers appear focused on talking about zero emission vehicles.

"If you are sitting on the fence and planning to stick with diesel until series production of zero emission trucks gets properly underway – and is financially viable to even consider – then I think you'll be waiting a long time and you are at risk of being overtaken by your rivals," warns Westcott.

"Our model is to build the gas refuelling facilities for everyone to make use of," he adds. "If we do that and you buy a gas truck which you're planning to run for three-to-five years, what are the chances of a new technology coming along within that timeframe which means your investment didn't work out? It's next-to-zero."

"And if we're the ones investing in the gas infrastructure in the meantime, what have you got to lose?"

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Highlights from the Hub

The transport industry gathered together for the first time in 18 months at the ITT Hub exhibition and conference – and FORS was there. **Mel Holley** reports

Much has changed since February 2020 when Covid restrictions started to bite, but innovation and technology in transport continued to march forward. There was a swathe of

announcements, new products and vehicles to enjoy at the end of June, as the first major business-to-business event in the UK for a year and a half opened its doors.

The inaugural Innovation and Technology in Transport (ITT Hub)

event spearheaded the future of transport and aimed to revolutionise the commercial vehicle market as the industry transitions to net-zero emissions and strives to reach maximum efficiency.

Held in Farnborough, the two-day exhibition and conference was attended by 4,000 professionals working within the transport industry. Visitors included engineers, managing directors, government representatives and major influencers in the sector.

More than 150 exhibitors packed out the 45,000 sq m indoor and outdoor venue space, showcasing a range of high-tech products and services.

Meanwhile, the Government hub was attended by several governmental departments and agencies.

In total, there were more than 20 manufacturers – such as Fiat, Ford, Iveco and DAF Trucks –



showcasing their vehicles, infrastructure and technology.

The event also played host to six public product launches. For example, Volta Trucks debuted the Volta Zero, the world's first purpose-built full-electric 16-tonne truck for the urban environment. Wrightbus revealed its first hydrogen fuel-cell double-decker bus, while DAF used ITT Hub for the UK debut of its New Generation XF range.

The ride and drive element of the event gave visitors the opportunity to try out products from 14 vehicle manufacturers. This part of ITT Hub proved a popular attraction, with visitors keen to get behind the wheel of everything from small electric vans to trucks and buses.

There was also the autonomous and last-mile electric hub, where visitors had the chance to test ride electric scooters and motorbikes designed for couriers and meal deliveries. They could also try out last-mile electric cargo trikes and a fully autonomous passenger 'pod'.

Thought leadership

British astronaut Major Tim Peake CMG was one of 30 speakers at ITT Hub's Future Logistics Conference which ran alongside the exhibition. Peake stressed the importance of prioritising the decarbonisation of transport to protect the future health of our planet.

The conference sessions were recorded and are now available to view on the event's website, where the presentation slides can also be downloaded from: <https://itthub.co.uk/2021-highlights/2021-future-logistics-conference/>

Driven to provide the industry with relevant insight year-round, ITT Hub launched ITT Hub TV at the event. Filmed live in the centre of the show, the 'In Conversation' series of in-depth interviews



with industry leaders by Peter Plisner, former BBC Transport Correspondent, is now being prepared for broadcast.

The EV Café sat at the heart of the event, with three live shows each day, tackling the hot topics of the moment. An online community, ITT Hub was the first ever physical outing for The EV Café. Visitors had the opportunity to learn from the experts at the forefront of EV technology, energy and infrastructure and have the chance to talk to them directly. The café shared experiences on zero emission mobility

A wide range of transport solutions were on show at ITT HUB, from autonomous pods (above) to long-haul trucks (below)



RIGHT: the FORS stand proved popular at ITT Hub, the first event FORS had exhibited at since Covid-19



by connecting the EV sector with industry experts and leaders from around the globe.

In the electric mobility theatre, ITT Hub teamed up with vehicle tracking leader and FORS Associate Webfleet Solutions and highway tyres specialist Bridgestone, to deliver presentations by key industry leaders. These talks gave visitors the opportunity to learn about some of the new developments across

the market. The presentations are now online at: <https://itthub.co.uk/2021-highlights/electric-mobility-theatre/>

BELOW: A wide range of vehicles filled the halls of the Farnborough venue



November conference for fleet operators launched

Following its successful debut, ITT Hub is staging a one-day conference on Wednesday 24 November, again at Farnborough International's Exhibition and Conference Centre. Following COP26, the UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow, the event will identify and examine the challenges and opportunities of decarbonising fleets.

The conference will provide fleet operators and suppliers with an opportunity to discuss and develop plans to undertake massive electrification, switch to cleaner fuels and reduce waste as an industry.

"As one of the first events after COP26, our conference will be timely, as the need for the transport sector to discuss and collaborate will be more potent than ever," says Mark Griffin, CEO, ITT Hub. "We will have a line-up of industry speakers who will be sharing the takeaway highlights from COP26 and their impact on the sector. With limited places we urge people to get it



in their diaries for another face-to-face event to look forward to as part of our commitment to industry collaboration.”

Looking to the future

As the decarbonisation of transport plan advances, the road transport sector needs to collaborate more than ever and ITT Hub provides the perfect platform. The event returns to Farnborough on 11-

12 May 2022 after a positive reaction from 2021's attendees. More than 15 vehicle manufacturers – and 50 companies in total – are already confirmed, as the event looks to build on a successful debut. Next year will see a new element added to the event, with a cold chain hub integrated into the ITT Hub. Supported by TCS&D (Temperature Controlled Storage and Distribution), it will accommodate more than 50 established companies.

ABOVE LEFT: the EV Café gave people the opportunity to find out more about options

Above: ITT Hub's conference was both well-attended and informative

Views from the show floor

• **Mark Griffin, CEO, ITT Hub:** “What a brilliant inauguration for ITT Hub. We were thrilled to welcome thousands of visitors, exhibitors and speakers to the event to explore the future of transport and tackle the challenges we face together as an industry. The recent announcement of the addition of the Cold Chain Hub by TCS&D has generated great interest, with several leading brands now finalising their stand space in the additional hall dedicated to this key area of the distribution market.”

• **Marieta Koleva, Marketing Manager, FORS:** “It was very constructive to meet members face to face after such a long time. We had a lot of visitors to the stand who were keen to learn more about FORS and the range of services we provide.”

• **Steve Jackson Managing Director, Wheely-Safe:** “The show has been a breath of fresh air, having bus and coach, truck and trailer under the same

roof. We've seen high quality visitors, including MDs, engineering directors, chief engineers and major influencers from potential customers. We will be back next year with a bigger and better set up.”

• **Steve Braund, Marketing Manager, Totalkare:** “It's been great to see customers face to face, meet friends old and new to foster new relationships and generate new business.”

• **Phil Moon, Marketing Manager, DAF Trucks:** “This has been a fantastic opportunity to showcase our latest product – the New Generation DAF – and our electric range. We had positive discussions with customers old and new.”

• **Duncan Forrester, Chief Communications Officer, Volta Trucks:** “It's been great to use ITT Hub as the public reveal of Volta Zero. We've been very happy with the interest in the vehicle

and decarbonisation journey we're on as a company. We look forward to being back next year with our running prototype vehicles.”

• **John McLeister, Sales and Business Development Director, Wrightbus:** “For Wrightbus, it was an overwhelming success. We launched our Electroliner and hydrogen bus. We are really pleased and look forward to the next ITT Hub.”

• **Carlos Rodrigues, Managing Director, Renault Trucks UK:** “ITT Hub was a great show. We had more than 70 people take part in the ride and drive and that has been a great experience.”

• **Alan Hunt, Managing Director, Schmitz Cargobull:** “We exhibited as ITT Hub is all about innovation and, as an industry leader in our field, it lines up with the development in our organisation on technology. This event falls very well in line for us.”

Payload rise

Away from the heavy end of the market, tipper manufacturers are vying for an edge amid a lot of strong competition.

By Steve Banner

Fuso's Canter 7.5-tonner has a healthy carrying capacity

One of the biggest changes to the light truck market over the past couple of decades has been the remorseless rise of lightweight but durable Far-Eastern-inspired chassis – especially at 7.5 tonnes. The now not-so-new newcomers have pushed aside a number of European-designed models that tend to be heavier and are often down-plated versions of bigger vehicles.

The key reason for the success of trucks such as Fuso's Canter 7.5-tonner is the healthy carrying capacity, explains Fuso's UK product manager, Yad Suresh. That means they have a particular appeal to payload-conscious customers such as tipper operators.



"Mount a tipper body on a Canter 7.5-tonne chassis and you can potentially achieve a payload of 3.8 to 3.9 tonnes," he points out. "In fact, you're pushing up to almost four tonnes. That figure is way in excess of the capacity offered by Fuso's European-inspired rivals."

There is no indication that Canter is any less durable or reliable than heavier models wearing more familiar badges. "Remember that it is designed to endure conditions in some countries in the Far East that are a lot harsher than you're going to find here," reasons Suresh. They include frequent overloading, extremes of climate and even worse roads than drivers have to endure in Britain.

Driver comforts

"Cab access is easy too," he says. "You don't have to climb up three steps – and a Canter 7.5-tonner is not in any way intimidating to drive."

The cab interior is not all that different from the interior of a light commercial, he contends. That means it should be reasonably easy for a van driver who has acquired the appropriate licence entitlement to make the switch.

Fuso is majority-owned by Daimler and its vehicles are sold, serviced and repaired by the Mercedes-Benz Trucks network in the UK. One reason why some businesses favour models such as Canter and Izuzu's Forward N75 at 7.5 tonnes is that they don't look like trucks. Their unassuming profiles makes them seem less obtrusive when they are delivering goods to home owners living on housing estates.





Says recently-appointed Isuzu Truck (UK) head of sales, Stuart Beeton: "The cab we fit to our 7.5-tonner is not massively bigger than the cab we fit to our 3.5-tonner."

Ease of driving is a reason why the two 7.5-tonners win regular plaudits. Marketed at either 150hp or 190hp, four-fifths of the N75s sold in Britain are equipped with the Easyshift automated transmission, which is well-suited to stop-start urban work.

Canter is available at either 150hp or 175hp at 7.5 tonnes, with the choice of either a five-speed manual or a five-speed Duonic automated box.

Beeton admits that N75 is better-tailored to some types of duty than others. For local builders who regularly shift sand, gravel and rubble, it is well-high ideal. For those who regularly shuttle pallets of lightweight goods from Newcastle-upon-Tyne to London in a maximum-width curtainsider body, it may not be a fleet operator's first choice.

Range of options

As Beeton's remarks indicate, the Isuzu range stretches beyond 7.5-tonnes, with a line-up extending from 3.5- to 13.5-tonnes.

"One model we offer is a 6.5-tonner which can tow a heavy trailer while remaining within the 8.25-tonne gross train weight limit," he explains.

Such a combination can be driven by somebody with so-called grandfather rights – ie somebody who obtained their car licence prior to 1 January 1997 – without the need to take a separate test.

Anybody with such an entitlement can drive a

rigid grossing at up to 7.5-tonnes. If they wish, they can tow a trailer grossing at up to 750kg with their 7.5-tonner without breaching the 8.25-tonne train weight restriction.

The licence change hit registrations of 7.5-tonners hard, as did subsequent changes to speed limiter legislation, which came into force in 2008. At an average yearly run rate of around 5,000 to 6,000 units over the past decade, which equates to approximately 15 per cent of the truck market, they are considerably less than half what they were in their heyday.

While Isuzu scored some 800 7.5-tonne sales in 2020 – "we're number two in the sector," says Beeton – its 3.5-tonne registrations totalled upwards of 1,000. "We were number six in the 3.5-tonne market last year," he reports.

Smaller vehicle volumes

Thanks largely to the home delivery market's growth, the demand for 3.5-tonners has soared – a 3.5-tonner can be driven on a standard car driver's licence. The forward-control configuration that Isuzu favours means that a long body can be fitted to a vehicle that will still have a more compact footprint than its largely-bonneted rivals and gives the driver a clear view of the road ahead.

Promoted under the Gafter banner, Isuzu's 3.5-tonner can now be specified with a fully-automatic six-speed Aisin gearbox. It can also be delivered pre-bodied – as a tipper for example – under Isuzu's Driveaway deal.

Despite a history of declining sales, 7.5-tonners still appeal to a hard core of operators. They can be just the right size for some types of multi-drop work and weight restrictions mean that anything heavier cannot use certain roads and bridges.

Running from 3.5- to 8.55-tonnes and including a 4x4 6.5-tonner, the Canter line-up also embraces the zero-emission battery/electric 7.5-tonne eCanter. Over 20 are now in service in the UK, including one that is being deployed by Warburtons and another that has joined logistics company DB Schenker.

The best of the rest

Operating in and around Bradford, the latter covers some 55 miles daily – maximum claimed range is over 60 miles, says Fuso – and is recharged overnight from a 22kW charging point. Half a dozen 13.8kWh lithium-ion batteries drive a 129kW electric motor.

“Remember that it is designed to endure conditions in some countries in the Far East that are a lot harsher than you're going to find here”

Light tippers

Isuzu's 3.5-tonner can now be specified with a fully-automatic six-speed Aisin gearbox

Isuzu is developing zero-emission vehicles too says Beeton and has been doing so in conjunction with other manufacturers. One project in hand, for example, is working with Honda on the development of fuel cell technology.

Closer to home, UK body builder Paneltex has produced battery-electric trucks using Isuzu chassis and Isuzu has been working with conversions specialist Electra Commercial Vehicles to the same end. Canter has just undergone a modest upgrade,

with exterior restyling, more onboard safety systems and the option of a narrower cab for the 3.5-tonner. Production of the new model starts in December.

None of the foregoing should be taken as suggesting that Fuso and Isuzu are having things all their own way. DAF remains market leader at 7.5-tonnes with the LF, while Iveco has, for some time, been mounting a canny attack on the sector with the 7.2-tonne Daily.

Although it is lighter than a 7.5-tonner, its payload capability stands comparison with what is on offer from either Canter or N75, and it is as easy to drive as a Daily 3.5-tonner – and unlike its rivals, it can also be ordered as a 7.0-tonne van.

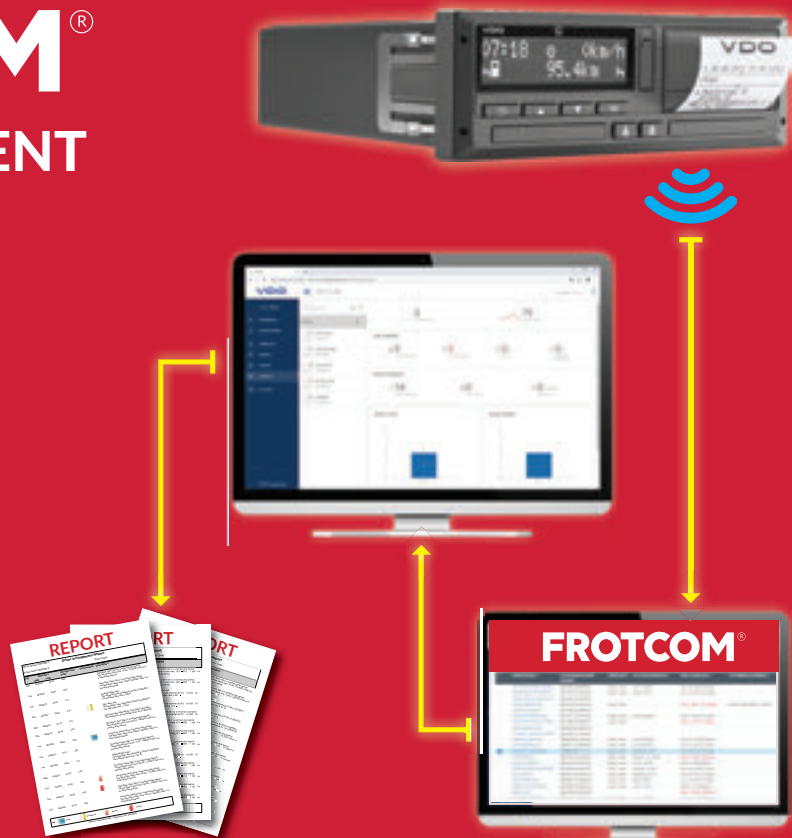


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Support line for fleets

To maximise vehicle uptime, avoid costly repairs and safeguard loads and road users, regular fleet inspections are key.

Mike Roberts reports

“

We have our online shop but we still offer the personal service for those who want it

”

It's a scene every workshop professional will be all too familiar with: bays blocked, a queue of vehicles on the schedule and customers waiting impatiently. Every vehicle off the road means downtime and a loss for the business.

So, for busy workshops, as well as fast, accurate fault resolution, it's vital to get parts installed quickly.

It wasn't that long ago that for technicians, the go-to knowledge source was a printed manual. Today, the latest technical information is available online, supported by practical help and advice videos, forums, manuals, assembly instruction and product training.

Knowing where to get the right help and support when it's needed makes all the difference. Sometimes you just don't have the luxury of waiting 48 hours for a helpdesk response. And some people prefer the human touch, as Deborah Burrows, Managing Director of Majorsell, the UK-based distributor of air brakes and quality commercial vehicle parts, notes.

"Customers can email us, but most still like to call, so we have four people manning the phones. Our expert advice and can-do attitude means we build long term customer relationships – they know they can come to us and we'll help. We have our online shop but we still offer the personal service for those who want it."

Parts specialists with personality

A fresh take is from Germany's Diesel Technic, which has created a personality-led approach with its Parts Specialists team. The goal is to 'create a more relaxed everyday workshop life for their colleagues worldwide by giving practical hints and tips around the product brands DT Spare Parts

and SIEGEL Automotive'. Fronting the show, with an easy-going manner and North German humour, double act Lars Mesloh and Kevin Berger share their expertise on YouTube. Both have many years of workshop experience under their belts, which shows in their clear and easy-to-understand videos that range from service and maintenance to trailer parts, fuel system, compressor air system and lighting system.

German efficiency underpins their approach: "When it comes to routine maintenance and servicing, it is important to look at everything systematically. We recommend working with a checklist to ensure that nothing is left out," says Mesloh.

He recommends starting the routine maintenance inspection by checking the axle geometry of the front axle and the rear axle. Begin with the front stabiliser bushings and press a mounting iron against the stabiliser and check if the bearings are worn out.

Steering column analysis

Steering and suspension are safety-critical systems for commercial vehicles, not only supporting heavy loads but also helping to maintain stability and control when accelerating and braking. Together, they keep tyres in alignment, reducing uneven wear and potential tyre failure, plus they maximise the contact between the tyre and the road to provide steering stability and good handling.

Although steering systems are generally pretty reliable, problems can start to creep in as the vehicle ages. They give driver directional control over the vehicle, so identifying issues early is essential.

On the steering column, the ball joints must be checked and special care should be taken to ensure that the sleeves are not torn, as water can then penetrate and detach the material inside, causing it to become brittle and the joint dislodged.

Using a pair of pliers, compress the tie rod and thrust rod ends down to ensure that there is no 'play' in the spring. Here, you need to know what type you're dealing with on the vehicle as new generation ball heads are pre-sprung – there's a spring behind the ball that pushes it up – so if you just compress the spring a little, many people then think that rod is defective and remove it.

However, that is not the case – you have to go beyond this spring point. As the spring is slightly preloaded, you need to observe the tolerances of the manufacturer's specifications in terms of how much play is allowed and then proceed accordingly.

Working systematically around the vehicle, check the tightness of the spring clamps and the shock absorbers, as well as the tyres, brake pads, rear stabiliser bushings, air bags on the rear axle, the spring brake actuator and brake pads.

Once the axle geometry has had a thorough check-up, it's time to change the oil and the fuel filter, and complete the rest of the maintenance routine.

Take a brake

When it comes to brake safety, there can be no compromise. The braking system is the most important safety component in any vehicle and, as many brake parts are subject to exceptionally high stresses and wear, only quality components can ensure optimum performance and reliability.

Following a regular preventative maintenance schedule is key. Brake hoses, for example, are safety-relevant components and should be tested during any vehicle maintenance. They are used as flexible connections at moving points between the body and chassis to transfer the brake fluid.

Before you replace the hose, first check for contamination, water content and, if necessary, rinse. The new brake hose is screwed manually into the thread on the side with the external thread and mounted with the torque specified by the manufacturer.

Then the brake hose with the three holders must be aligned tension-free and care must be taken that no chafe marks can occur on the brake hose.

After the other side has been fitted and the brake system vented, a final leak and function test must be carried out.

As one of the most safety critical wear parts in a vehicle, brake drums are subject to extreme stresses. They provide a friction surface for the brake pads and convert kinetic energy into heat.

Brake drums may only be machined down by maximum 2mm in the inner diameter and should always be replaced in pairs with the linings across the axle. An upwards and downwards movement



when braking can be due to an out-of-round brake drum. In this case, replacement is recommended.

Facing a problem with the starter system, then the first place to look is the battery to see if that is the cause. As visual check for external damage, for example if any acid has leaked out, check the battery poles to see if they are oxidised, and check the battery voltage. Follow this by checking the power supply to the starter and the relay. If the multimeter shows good readings, we can assume that the fault is in the starter, which will need to be removed to locate the cause.

Starter faults

There are a few faults that occur frequently with starters. For example, a loose contact can occur when the nuts are not tightened to the correct torque, or when contacts are handled with lever tools or something similar.

Similarly, a worn cable with damaged insulation allows foreign contaminants to build up on the inner cable, leading to short circuits, contact problems and starter malfunctioning.

The final words of wisdom from Mesloh and Berger: "You should not turn to the workshop you trust only in the event of an emergency repair. To ensure that the vehicle remains safe, it should be serviced regularly. Regular maintenance is the best way to maximise the vehicle's operational life, avoid costly repairs and protect yourself and other road users."

Lars Mesloh and Kevin Berger share their expertise on YouTube videos

Down to earth operator

A look at life inside construction company – and FORS Gold member – Collins Earthworks. **By Steve Banner >>>>>>**





If foundations or reinforced earth embankments are required for a major civil engineering project, or large quantities of concrete and bricks need to be recycled, FORS member Collins Earthworks is likely to be involved. Under the Collins Demolition banner the company will set about knocking down a redundant factory, office block or multi-storey car park safely and efficiently.

With roots stretching back well over two decades, the East Midlands-based business is a key player in the construction industry. Recent projects have included excavating the north portal site of Long Itchington Wood Tunnel in Warwickshire for HS2, which involved the removal of 300,000cu³ of material. Including eight-wheelers, low-loaders and road sweepers, the firm's fleet of trucks is 52-strong.

Collins prides itself on operating to the highest-possible levels of quality, which is why it is a FORS Gold member. "We like to aim high and if there is a standard there, we tend to go for it," says Director, Jack Cave. "We always want to show we're making progress."

The story so far

Collins Earthworks registered with FORS three years ago. Achieving Bronze status was a challenge, Cave admits: "We found it quite hard going initially." But the firm received valuable help from an outside consultant.

Committing to FORS did not require a major upgrade for the truck fleet given that the average age of the vehicles the business operates is not all that high. Typically they are no more than five or six years old. "We had to retrofit camera systems in a few cases but, by and large, that was all that was required," says Cave.

What the commitment did involve, however, was investment in driver training and encouraging drivers who might be wary of anything that smacks of going back to the classroom to attend courses.

Sarah Housley, the firm's FORS Champion, says: "I've had to sweet-talk some of the staff a little bit, but most of them have been OK about it. In fact, when we've recently spoken to drivers who have committed driver's hours infringements about training to help them avoid such incidents happening again, they've said they'd welcome it. "I think they've become more willing to learn," she states.

Collins has used a Safe Urban Driving course to help drivers gain a better understanding of how cyclists view trucks and how vulnerable they may feel – a course that involves getting on a bicycle

and riding it in traffic. Cave took part in it, enjoyed the experience and found it to be of value. "It was great fun," he reports. "In fact, it turned out to be one of the best courses I've ever done."

FORS' attention to detail

Housley highlights the work FORS has done on raising driver awareness of potential security and terrorist threats, specifically in terms of the theft of vehicles or loads and the use of vehicles as a weapon, as a useful benefit too. The Security and Counter Terrorism eLearning module was developed by FORS in conjunction with a number of key stakeholders including the Metropolitan Police and HS2.

Aside from enhancing safety, FORS membership has prompted the firm to keep a closer eye on fuel costs – and therefore CO₂ emissions – and on expenditure on tyres and servicing. "It helps us as a business," says Housley.

Around 90 per cent of the work the trucks do involves going on and off construction sites and other industrial sites and in and out of quarries. As a consequence, they are vulnerable to minor bumps and bangs, no matter how careful the drivers are.

"Fortunately the number of incidents we've experienced has not increased in recent years, even though the number of trucks we run has. We've been giving our drivers some extra training," says



“We like to aim high and if there is a standard there, we tend to go for it. We always want to show we're making progress”



Cave. Few truck operators are more wholeheartedly loyal to the Volvo brand than Collins. "The service support we get is brilliant and there is a dealer half-way between our two yards," says Cave. "The reliability of the Volvo product is as good or better than anything else that's on the market."

Fleet upgrades

Collins operates depots at Ripley in Derbyshire and Kirkby-in-Ashfield in Nottinghamshire. The dealer he refers to is Hartshorne Motor Services, which has just supplied Collins with five new Volvo FMX 500 Globetrotter 6x4 tractor units for use with ejector trailers.

Among the first new-model FMX units to be delivered in the UK, the trucks are equipped with an innovative tandem axle lift. It enables drive to the rearmost axle to be disengaged and the axle lifted clear of the ground, reducing fuel consumption and tyre wear when running empty.

Their 12-speed automated I-Shift transmissions feature software that adapts gear changes to the needs of the construction industry.

Collins Earthworks is a big purchaser of Volvo construction equipment too, with around 120 to 130 pieces in operation. "What is more, we're one of a handful of dealers in the UK that supplies some of the smaller machines in the Volvo construction range," Cave says.

Collins Plant Sales at Ripley sells Volvo compact excavators and wheel loaders and small asphalt compactors.

Seventy per cent of the service and repair work carried out on the fleet's vehicles is handled in-house, with Volvo dealer workshops handling the rest. The new Volvos are covered by a Volvo Blue Contract, with routine service and maintenance carried out by Hartshorne. "Our trucks are inspected every five weeks and we aim at a 100 per cent MoT pass rate," says Cave.

Dealing with driver shortages

Like many operators, Collins Earthworks is battling against a growing lack of drivers in the UK.

"We're always a couple short," admits Cave. That is despite the fact that the employment package the company offers is a competitive one. Although there is occasional weekend working with some nights away, drivers are typically on a five-day working week, he says.

What is more, the trucks they drive are typically specified to a high standard. The FMX 6x4s boast leather seats, fridge-freezers and microwave ovens.

The driver shortage will not result in Collins diluting its standards and hiring just anyone who walks in with a C or C+E entitlement, Collins stresses. "We have to get the right people. Anybody can get an HGV licence but that does not make them a truck driver."



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Staying compliant with Dr Air-Brake

Doctor Air-Brake is always looking to help HGV operators and their fleet managers stay compliant.

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If the tractor's socket is good, the clearly visible end will glow green, telling the driver that the EBS socket is compliant. If not it will glow red.

Just imagine fleet managers being able, at a glance, to see the green glow, letting them know that all is OK.

We are all aware how much focus is currently

on the HGV world and its drivers, so this simple item takes away some of the work involved with a clear visual display.

The other obvious benefit is for mobile technicians. While carrying out the vehicle's checks, they can plug the ISO-Tool into the EBS socket and the same will occur – a simple green/red warning system, allowing them to quickly identify where a potential fault lies.

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Aspoeck's success for installing solar cells in electric chiller vans



“Our panels, despite being only 3mm thick, offer industry-leading levels of energy conversion”

Aspoeck systems, Europe's largest manufacturer of commercial vehicle lighting systems, has always stood for innovation and quality in a marketplace where return on investment and maximisation of assets is critical.

This philosophy has seen recent success, yet again, for the Austrian manufacturer – this time through the integration of its market-leading solar cells into fully electric chiller vans. The cells, part of Aspoeck's Fabrilcar range, come direct out of Canada.

Working with Hireco, one of the leading commercial vehicle rental specialists throughout the UK and Ireland, the solution is currently in service, ensuring maximum range potential in London's low emission zone on 'final mile' delivery services.

The challenge

The challenge faced by any operator of EVs (electric vehicles) is maximising the range of the vehicle. This, when coupled with a 'chiller' style operation drawing energy from the battery, is the perfect application for solar.

"Range anxiety is a major concern for most fleet operators of electric vehicles," said Adam Mitchell, Aspoeck UK's technical manager, "and this is where solar has an instant benefit, acting to mitigate the loss of range associated with additional energy consumers on the vehicle.

"This is the challenge and we decided our solution offered best return on investment."

The solution

Aspoeck's solution to the problem was to utilise the dead space on the roof of the vehicle, installing panels and routing them to the 12v battery already installed in the vehicle.

100w solar panels, linked through a highly-efficient controller direct to the existing battery bank ensures the system offers the maximum possible return on investment.

"Our panels, despite being only 3mm thick, offer industry-leading levels of energy conversion," says Mitchell, "and this is achieved by using cutting-edge materials and technology and the know-how to ensure they are utilised in the best possible way for our industry demands – not to mention our climate conditions."

Mitchell adds: "Our solar panels offer a robust solution, with a fit-and-forget principle – no need for constant telematic monitoring or servicing, just install the panels and controllers and have the peace of mind you need."



Aspoeck panels are just 3mm thick

Proven technology

This development is just the latest in a long line of successful installations of the panels – everything from sea going buoys, to trailer fridge battery backup, caravans to electric chiller vans. With over 200,000 panels installed globally and a range of panels and chargers to suit any application, Aspoeck's position at the forefront of the electrical revolution is assured.



For more information, contact Aspoeck UK on 01279 655220 or sales@aspoeck.co.uk



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www.amber-valley.co.uk

What is DVS?

The Direct Vision Standard is new safety legislation from Transport for London.

From 1st March 2021, HGVs over 12T will need a Safety Permit to enter Greater London.
 Visit tfl.gov.uk for more info.

When?

Apply for permit now!

- 0 - star vehicles need a Safe System to apply
- 1-5 star vehicles can apply
- 1st March 2021 law in effect
- 0 - star HGVs without Safe Systems will be banned

HGVs WITHOUT PERMIT ENTERING GREATER LONDON WILL BE FINED UP TO **£550 PER DAY**

A variety of
 timer and on/
 off modules are
 available!

ONE STOP SHOP FOR ALL YOUR DVS REQUIREMENTS

FIT THIS - AVDVSS1

Standard DVS kit contains:

- AVBS1S - Blind Spot Take Care Label
- AVBSK1 - Blind Spot Kit
- AVCAMSYS1 - 1 Side Camera + 7 Inch Monitor



FIT THIS - AVDVSS2

Superior DVS kit contains:

- AVBS1S - Blind Spot Take Care Label
- AVBSK4 - Blind Spot Kit + Alarmlight
- AVCSWL03/04 - Square/Circle LED Cycle Light
- AVDEL07 - Push On/Off Instant Module
- AVCAMSYS2 - Side & Rear Camera + 7 Inch Monitor



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- 1) System completely tested to guarantee components function correctly prior to fitting.
- 2) Simpler to fit as plug & play, never need to go behind the dashboard again.
- 3) Fault finding is simpler in the eventuality of a breakdown.

In many cases this can be performed over the phone saving expensive down time.



ID: A00186

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For 2021, 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
- 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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