



AUTUMN 2024

STANDARD MAGAZINE

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SHINING STAR

Meet the FORS Advanced Practitioner who excels with her dedication

HONESTY PAYS

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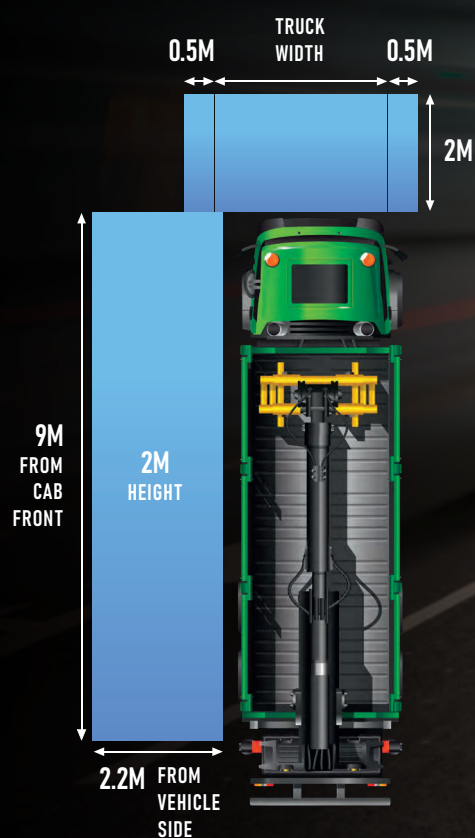


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HELLO & WELCOME



Welcome to the latest edition of The Standard

As I write this piece, I'm also busy sharpening up my reporter's pencil ready for the big event. I'm talking here, of course, about the FORS Annual Conference that takes place on Tuesday 15 October at the International Convention Centre in Birmingham.

I cannot stress too highly the importance of this Conference. I've been attending these annual events for some years now and as time passes, I've been more and more impressed with what's on offer. The theme this year is: Drive and Thrive – Your Road Map to Success. And that title alone should get all FORS Accredited Operators booking up to attend straight away. As I write, some 500 delegates have already signed up and the organisers are expecting the event to sell out, so if you haven't already booked your place, turn to page 16 right now and follow the instructions for doing so.

I've come away from each Annual Conference bursting with new ideas for articles in this magazine and also feeling full of hope that, under FORS' guidance, Britain's transport industry will become cleaner, greener and safer in the future.

There is a stunning array of speakers lined up this year to impart their knowledge and wisdom. Chairman once again will be Andy Salter, a fellow journalist of mine for many years who is well-respected in the industry – and he certainly made things shipshape and Bristol fashion in 2023.

Speakers for this year include former Intelligence Officer and leadership development expert Tim Bradshaw of Sandstone Communications, alongside National Vehicle Crime Intelligence Service Police Officer, Michael Dawber.

There will be panel discussions on decarbonisation featuring representatives from DAF Trucks, fuel supplier and HVO-advocate New Era Energy and also DEKRA, the German Motor Vehicle Inspection Association – a global expert in vehicle testing, inspection and certification. There will be a special spotlight on selected FORS Accredited Operators, including Speedy Services, Harlow Timber and food services and distribution company Bidcorp.

Jonathon Backhouse from transport law firm, Backhouse Jones, will be asking 'Are we de-skilling our drivers with technology?', while Karl Wilshaw from Travis Perkins and Lisa

Dorn from PsyDrive will be discussing 'The human factor in fleet safety'. Hot topics will see Kate Armitage tackling 'The decarbonisation of transport' while Nick Chambers will be representing headline sponsor Drivetechnic and looking at 'Using data to improve driver safety'.

There will be a full update on the last 12 months from FORS Concession Director Geraint Davies and FORS Technical Adviser Glen Davies, picking up on the conference theme.

And if you are attending the event this year for the first time, you will also find an exhibition hall full of stands showcasing the latest technologies and innovations from the road transport industry. If you have any questions or areas of operation that you aren't sure about, you'll find any number of experts on hand to give you some solid advice.

Meanwhile, as usual, this issue is packed full of the usual mix of news, views and features, giving readers advice on how to run their transport operations in a safer, greener way. We always make sure we feature a couple of FORS 'stars' in each issue so those Accredited Operators who aren't so far down the FORS road as them can learn from the ways they achieved their success.

I know that some transport operators are barely keeping their heads above water at present in this increasingly competitive marketplace. If you are among them, turn to page 40 and you'll find some expert advice on staying in business.

With that, I invite you to read on, learn and enjoy!



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FORS set to welcome single van owner/operators



FORS has announced it is to deliver its best practice road transport principles for single van operations where the vehicle owner is also the driver. The move is aimed at driving up standards of safety, efficiency and environmental protection in this relatively hard to reach sector, with the help of a low-cost, easy to understand FORS accreditation.

While van operations are regulated, the requirement to evidence compliance, conduct checks, undertake training and retain records is less stringent than for businesses operating under O-Licence conditions.

The FORS Bronze audit includes management responsibilities, driver competence and fitness, vehicle roadworthiness and operational management.

A dedicated toolkit has been developed to assist owner van drivers in preparing for audit.

Once registered, FORS

provides access to the extensive FORS Professional training portfolio as well as further benefits and incentives from FORS events and partner offers.

FORS has already engaged with leading courier and

We identified a marked gap in the availability of resources, information and training for this growth sector

parcel delivery specialist Cargo2Go via the Transport Exchange Group – where business is shared among self-employed van drivers, and where FORS is now in place to serve as a best practice requirement.

Van operators are invited to adopt FORS, after which, accreditation will be viewed by the courier and parcel delivery companies as an advantage in earning new business.

Following a successful roll-out of this new route

to accreditation, FORS is expected to gain traction with self-employed owner van drivers more widely, encompassing last mile parcel deliveries and tradespeople representing a diverse range of professions.

Today, some 4.5 million vans are registered in the UK – over 50 per cent of them registered to individuals.

With the growth in eCommerce, increasing numbers of owner van drivers are fulfilling urban and last-mile deliveries.

The market is competitive and with many owner van drivers wanting to differentiate and gain recognition as a good operator, FORS is there to provide relevant accreditation.

Geraint Davies, Concession Director at FORS, said: “Following our assessment of owner van driver operations, we identified a marked gap in the availability of resources, information and training for

Above: FORS is inviting van owner drivers to join the scheme

this growth sector. Over the past decade, fleet industry practices have developed to address some of the key safety and environmental concerns and we found that self-employed drivers needed more targeted communications on these issues and a different approach to achieve the requirements of the FORS Standard.”

Richard Mosley from Roving Richard, a FORS accredited van operator, said: “After seeking to improve standards and professionalism in our small business, gaining FORS accreditation was, without a doubt, simple and very beneficial.

“We joined to be part of a community dedicated to safety and efficiency, and we’re confident FORS will help raise the bar for the entire van industry.” •

Van drivers still guilty of using mobile phones on the move



Over half (57%) of UK van drivers still physically check their mobile phones while driving, according to Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles research. This is despite the most recent update to Regulation 110 of the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986, banning the use of all hand-held devices behind the wheel and an increased fine of £200 fine and six penalty points.

While the proportion of van drivers checking their phones has reduced by 7% versus 2023 – in which 64% of UK van drivers confessed to checking their phones – one in 10 still admit to not only doing so while driving, but doing so often.

Demonstrating the scale and ongoing prevalence of the issue among the UK's van drivers, a recently released Department for Transport survey found that van drivers are more than twice as likely to use their mobile phones while driving, compared to all other types of driver.

The research confirmed

Above: more than half of van drives admit to illegally using their mobile phones on the road

that the decision to ignore mobile phone driving laws is not the result of a lack of available hands-free technology. In fact, 98% of respondents stated that their vans have in-built technology to support hands-free driving, with almost all (93%) using the technology at least once during the working day.

John Ricardo-Neto, head of product planning at Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles, said: “While there’s still a large number of van drivers ignoring the mobile driving laws at some stage throughout the day, it’s positive to see that van drivers are, for the most part, using hands-free technology while on the road. Every new Volkswagen van is packed with useful in-cabin tech such as Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, as well as the ability of voice control, allowing drivers to maintain their eyes, and focus, on the road at all times.” •

Drivers make increasing use of dashcam footage

Commercial vehicle drivers are increasingly using dashcam footage to report incidents of bad driving. Consequently, the number of video reports to UK police forces received via the National Dash Cam Safety Portal (NDCSP) is set to increase by almost a third (31 per cent) this year.

Throughout 2024, there has been an increase in the number of videos submitted through the portal, with 24,000 submissions by the end of June. However, reports of dangerous driving tend to spike over summer, with June 2023 taking the title of the most uploads in a single month, with May and July also making the top five.

Year-to-date, the top five regions processing the most uploads were the West Midlands, West Mercia, Northumberland, Surrey and South Yorkshire. These five regions have already received more than 18,000 submissions in 2024, more than the total number

submitted across the UK in the whole of 2021.

Five years since its launch, the NDCSP, in partnership with Egress – a Government-tier security data hosting specialist, responsible for developing and delivering the platform’s technology – has processed more than 135,000 dangerous driving

The number of video reports to UK police forces received via the National Dash Cam Safety Portal (NDCSP) is set to increase

clips, saving an estimated 123 years of police time.

The platform, which was built to allow motorists to quickly and securely upload footage of dangerous driving to the relevant police force, now works with every police force in England. •

Below: Use of dashcam footage is helping to make Britain’s roads safer



Skills shortage remains a big problem for electric vehicle repairs

Fleets using electric trucks and vans face a lottery when wanting to get them repaired and serviced. Almost one in four technicians are now qualified to work on electric vehicles but the UK still faces a postcode lottery for EV skills.

Latest EV TechSafe certification data from the Institute of the Motor Industry (IMI) shows that 58,800 technicians are now qualified to work on electric vehicles, representing 24 per cent of the UK automotive workforce.

Based on the forecast increase in EVs on UK roads, the IMI is currently predicting a shortfall of 3,000 technicians by 2031. The gap is expected to reach 16,000 by 2035.

It's a big fall from the IMI's previous prediction of a shortfall of 35,700 technicians by 2030, but still presents major challenges for fleets.

The new IMI data also illustrates the current postcode lottery for EV skills. While London and the South East have the higher

proportion of EVs, according to data, the regions do not boast the larger proportion of EV-certified technicians. Just 6.1 per cent and 6.4 per cent of technicians in London and the South East respectively are EV trained.

The East of England has the highest rate of EV qualifications (9.5 per cent, while Northern Ireland has the lowest rate (3.7 per cent).

Kevin Finn, executive chair at the IMI, said: "There has been encouraging growth in the number of technicians gaining EV certification so far in 2024. However, with the reinstatement of the 2030 ICE ban deadline by the new government, the skills gap remains.

"Automotive businesses urgently need to prioritise training more technicians so that the expected rising number of EV owners can find a local technician qualified to work safely on their vehicle when needed." •

Above: more EV technicians are required to service and maintain the growing number of zero emission vehicles



New electric refuse vehicle adds to Northants' green credentials



A new all electric 27-tonne refuse vehicle is now collecting waste and recycling from North Northamptonshire residents. The vehicle is quieter than a traditional refuse truck and has zero emissions. It will reduce the council's carbon footprint, saving 60,000 litres of diesel and £75,000 over the course of its lifetime.

The vehicle has been provided on contract hire by North Northamptonshire Council's vehicle partner Specialist Fleet Services (SFS) as part of a significant vehicle replacement programme awarded in 2022.

Cllr Matt Binley, North Northamptonshire Council's Executive Member for Highways, Travel and Assets, said: "The arrival of this new vehicle is a step towards a cleaner and quieter waste fleet and will help us become carbon neutral by 2030. Our plans to be greener are a team effort and we are thankful to the team at SFS for helping us to access the very latest in electric vehicle technology. Every small change we make will help

Above: Cllr Matt Binley, Executive Member for Highways, Travel and Assets, and Jason Smithers, Leader of the Council, with the new Dennis Eagle eCollect 27t electric RCV at North Northants depot

make a big difference in the long term and, on this occasion residents, shouldn't notice much change except from a quieter vehicle doing the rounds."

Bob Sweetland, Managing Director, SFS said: "We are

The arrival of this new vehicle is a step towards a cleaner and quieter waste fleet

delighted to be helping North Northamptonshire Council achieve its environmental goals by reducing the carbon footprint of its fleet and introducing alternative fuel technologies. At the same time, we remain committed to delivering cost savings and improving operational efficiency wherever possible."

SFS celebrated its 30-year anniversary in 2023. •

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Words: **Matthew Eisenegger**

DRIVE AND THRIVE: YOUR ROAD MAP TO SUCCESS

This year's theme well and truly drives home the FORS message



Flashback to last year's FORS
Annual Conference





A key highlight of the FORS Annual Conference will be the bustling exhibition hall

FORS is gearing up for its biggest event of the year – the FORS Annual Conference – and already more than 500 delegates have registered to attend this unmissable event.

Confirmed for Tuesday 15 October, the theme for 2024's event is 'Drive and thrive: your road map to success'. The conference will be staged once again at the International Convention Centre (ICC) in Birmingham and will be chaired by leading road transport industry commentator, Andy Salter.

Delegates can expect a deep dive into decarbonisation, data insights, driver

behaviour and more – all designed to keep FORS Accredited Operators abreast of industry trends and ahead of the competition in an increasingly tough market. One of the highlights will be the FORS Quality Assurance team giving a full rundown of changes to the V7 Standard.

In keeping with last year's event, the FORS Annual Conference boasts the participation of influential stakeholders from right across the transport sector, each presenting to delegates throughout the day. They include former Intelligence Officer and leadership development expert, Tim Bradshaw of Sandstone

Communications, alongside vehicle crime investigator from the Met Police, Michael Dawber.

There will be panel discussions on decarbonisation featuring representatives from DAF Trucks, fuel supplier and HVO-advocate New Era Energy and also DEKRA, the German Motor Vehicle Inspection Association – a global expert in vehicle testing, inspection and certification. There will be a special spotlight on selected FORS Accredited Operators, including Speedy Services, Harlow Timber and food services and distribution company Bidcorp.



Fuel supplier and HVO-advocate New Era Energy will join the decarbonisation debate



One session will pose the question: 'Are we de-skilling our drivers with technology?'

Jonathon Backhouse from transport law firm, Backhouse Jones, will be asking 'Are we de-skilling our drivers with technology?', while Karl Wilshaw from Travis Perkins and Lisa Dorn from PsyDrive will be discussing 'The human factor in fleet safety'. Hot topics will see Kate Armitage tackling 'The decarbonisation of transport' while Nick Chambers will be representing headline sponsor Drivtech and looking at 'Using data to improve driver safety'.

There will be a full update on the last 12 months from FORS Concession Director Geraint Davies and FORS Technical Adviser Glen Davies, picking-up on the



Panel discussions on decarbonisation will feature representatives from DAF Trucks

conference theme, 'Drive and thrive: your road map to success'.

A key highlight of the FORS Annual Conference will be the bustling exhibition hall, showcasing the latest technologies and innovations from the road transport industry. This area provides a fantastic opportunity for transport professionals to share knowledge and expertise, while offering ample opportunities to network with senior road transport professionals. World leader in fleet risk and driver safety management, Drivetechn, is the headline sponsor of the event.

Geraint Davies said: "It is so important for our FORS Accredited Operators to share a platform and to feedback on exactly what the scheme is trying to

In addition to a superb cast of presenters, we'll be revealing some significant updates to the scheme

achieve. The conference is a brilliant opportunity to do just that.

"In addition to a superb cast of presenters, we'll be revealing some significant updates to the scheme, including a new FORS Audit Platform and some exciting news concerning our FORS Professional training programme.

"Our mission, of course, remains to help accredited operators become safer, smarter and greener, and we're doing this through a collaborative approach with operators, manufacturers, suppliers and industry bodies. Engaging with the transport industry is essential to the overall health and well-being of the scheme," said Davies, "The conference provides us all with a great opportunity to talk, and to network some very influential captains of industry." ■

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FORS Annual Conference

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Words: **Matthew Eisenegger**

SKIPPING TO SUCCESS

FORS Gold accreditation proves a 'massive selling point' for community hero Sharp Skips

Now over 40 years into its operation, Essex-based waste management company Sharp Skips has stated that FORS accreditation has increased its reputation for reliability and exceptional customer service, as it continues to cement its role as a pillar of the local community.

From its base in Rainham, the FORS Gold Accredited Operator manages a mixed fleet of nearly 40 vehicles, ranging from skips and roll-on roll-offs to grabber loaders and tippers. Since beginning its FORS journey, the business has continued to reap the rewards of FORS accreditation.

Though cost savings and safety improvements have been the two most tangible advantages for Sharp Skips since gaining FORS accreditation, the business' sustainability efforts and community

support initiatives have also played a crucial role in its success, as Ryan Jones, Head of Sales at Sharp Skips, explained.

He said: "There's no doubt that FORS accreditation has enabled us to cut down on costs across our entire operation and champion safety within our sector.

"But it's the collective efforts of our team over the years that have helped to make this possible, which is why family and community have been core to our operation from the outset.

"Not only do many Sharp family members still work for the company, but we've also employed many staff from the local community over the years who are passionate about giving back."

Charity cycle ride

"Just recently, for example, several team members completed a sponsored cycle ride to Ypres – a 140-mile journey in aid



There's no doubt that FORS accreditation has enabled us to cut down on costs across our entire operation and champion safety within our sector



Left: FORS certification proves to any potential new client that the firm knows what it is talking about

of Homeless Veterans UK. In doing so, we managed to raise over £5,000 for the charity, which helps enable veterans to return to work.

“Alongside this, we regularly organise charity days and raffles for the Francis Hope Hospice, in addition to collaborating with local schools to offer educational workshops on waste management and recycling – helping to raise awareness and promote sustainable practices among young people,”

Ryan continued: “We also invest in local infrastructure and amenities to enhance the quality of life for residents, by organising park clean-ups and installing recycling bins in public areas. By working closely with local authorities

Above: Being FORS Gold has enabled the firm to access a plethora of high-profile customers over the years

and community groups, we ensure that our efforts align with the needs and priorities of the communities we serve.”

Crucially, though, Sharp Skips’ dedication to community service and sustainable practices is matched by its continuous pursuit of operational excellence – a commitment further enhanced by FORS accreditation.

Many benefits

“From an operational perspective, with the help and guidance of FORS, we’ve been able to increase fuel efficiency fleet-wide, thanks to the scheme’s driver training initiatives designed to improve driving styles. The result is that our drivers are now consistently hitting their

targets, which in turn has increased our customer loyalty. Safety practices have also been strengthened – for instance, all vehicles in our fleet have been fitted with cameras to boost driver awareness and minimise safety risks.

“In terms of sustainability, we’ve made huge strides in recent years. For instance, in 2022, we attained an 88 per cent recycling rate, translating to 76.56 cubic yards of waste being prevented from going to landfill. Our CO2 emissions levels have also dropped – thanks to the technology within our fleet of modern vehicles – and our closed-loop recycling system has significantly minimised our environmental footprint.

“Above all, FORS Gold accreditation is a massive selling point for Sharp Skips. The certification proves to any potential new client that we know what we’re talking about – particularly when it comes to environmental and safety standards.

“Some of our contractors simply won’t consider doing business with operators below the FORS Silver status and being FORS Gold has enabled us to access a plethora of high-profile customers over the years. And, since we operate in such a saturated market, being the highest level of FORS accreditation places us in a hugely advantageous position among our competitors.” ■

Sharp Skips has been able to increase fuel efficiency fleet-wide



Drivers are now consistently hitting their targets, which in turn has increased customer loyalty

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Words: **James Backhouse** and **Jo Dawson-Gerrard** from **Backhouse Jones** and **Gordon Humphreys** from **Foster Tachographs**

TOO QUICK OFF THE MARK

What to do when software analysis flags up an issue with overspeeding



Overspeeding is not a simple matter and needs to be handled with care

Many transport managers and fleet chiefs will receive tachograph infringement reports, which identify overspeeding as an issue for particular drivers, from the analysis software they are using. It is important to understand what overspeeding means within the context of traffic regulations.

What is overspeeding?

Overspeeding is defined as meaning exceeding the authorised speed of the vehicle, ie the speed limiter level, for more than 60 seconds.

This is not as straightforward as it sounds. The 'overspeed' report will only

pick up speed in excess of the speed limiter for the relevant vehicle limit, not the speed limit on the road. In practice, this means that a driver driving on a motorway in an HGV where lawfully he can drive up to 60 mph, will in fact not be doing anything wrong if he is going downhill and the vehicle exceeds the speed limited 90km an hour (56 mph). On the face of it, care has to be taken when looking at overspeed events to try and understand what is happening.

What does the vehicle unit record?

The vehicle unit is not designed or required by law to record all overspeeding events and this therefore gives a misrepresentation to an operator when

running reports that may be produced from analysis software.

Certain overspeeding events will not be recorded. For example, drivers who exceed the speed limiter level, but return to that speed level in 60 seconds or less, will not be recorded. Furthermore, many overspeeding events will be overwritten by the vehicle unit, when either the next event or another event is considered to be more serious or, where the number of events means that the oldest one is erased from the memory.

The vehicle unit is required by law to store the following overspeed events:

- The first event having occurred after the last calibration
- The five most serious events which have

- occurred over the last 365 days
- The most serious event for each of the 10 last days of occurrence
- Therefore, a vehicle unit will only store 16 overspeed events.

Here are some examples:

Scenario 1

A vehicle unit is downloaded on the first day of April for the previous month. The vehicle has been used every day and there was at least one overspeed event on each day.

Only the last 10 days' most serious events will be stored on the vehicle unit and the previous overspeed events will be overwritten.

Therefore, in a 31-day period, in this example, 21 days of overspeed events have been overwritten. Furthermore, it is only the most serious event for each of the last 10 days that is stored.

Scenario 2

If there has been more than one overspeed event on a single day, then only the most serious is stored on the vehicle unit and this is calculated as the one with the highest average speed.

Therefore, if there have been two drivers in the vehicle, Driver A and Driver B, Driver A has an overspeed event with a maximum speed of 109kmph and an average speed of 106kmph. This data would then be compared with the overspeed event of Driver B.

If Driver B has a maximum speed of 120kmph but an average speed of 105kmph, then Driver A's data will be stored, as it is the one with the highest average speed, and Driver B's event would not be stored and therefore not reported on the vehicle unit data.

How to use this information

As an operator or transport manager, it is important that the overspeed report is viewed as a screening device and to identify, initially, the most serious reported overspeed events. By addressing those, this should result in those other drivers who are currently not being reported being reported in the future.

What should be done?

The driver will need to be spoken to and dealt with on any overspeed infringement, unless it can be established that the speeding has occurred on a motorway and is legitimate.

Do not ignore extended periods of overspeed, if the speed limiter is, on the face of it, not working correctly. That may be apparent by the length of time



the overspeeding is recorded. Defective speed limiters are a serious issue and need taking up with the driver concerned and/or the maintenance facility, since the speed limiter is legally required to be calibrated and fixed to work at the correct speed.

The alternative – and most common scenario – is that the speed limiter is operating correctly but nonetheless, there are a number of overspeed events flagging up the various drivers.

In this scenario, it's important to work out where the driver was at the point when the overspeed occurred. Clearly, if the driver is on an A road (whether in England, Wales or Scotland) and not on the motorway, then speed limiter overspeeding also represents speeding

On that basis, it is important that where overspeed events are seen, the manager is able to identify, either with tracking or by knowing the nature of the journey, where the vehicle was, so that it can be followed up with the driver.

Can this be used to identify driver performance generally?

Overspeeding analysis is a bit of a numb way of assessing driver performance as regards speed limits. It only picks up issues that are over 60 seconds in length and furthermore, does not itself identify the location and does not necessarily identify the worst offenders.

Historically, operators were expected to have arrangements for managing speeding, but there was not much

It is important that the overspeed report is viewed as a screening device to identify the most serious events

in terms of breaching the national speed limit from the class of vehicle they are driving.

Where that is the case, the driver is likely to face sanctions if that were to come to the attention of the Traffic Commissioner under the driver conduct powers. It is one of the standard undertakings on a goods vehicle operator's licence that the firm will have arrangements to ensure that speed limits are adhered to.

guidance as to what that looked like. It was difficult to manage drivers speeding when they were out on the road.

However, today with GPS and telematics technology and other safe driver monitoring systems now widespread, it is much easier to identify driver misconduct and operators are expected to be engaging with appropriate systems and processes to manage this risk.

Lead by example

As a final point, on the question of speeding generally, a particularly unattractive situation is one that involves either a director of the company or transport manager of the business being involved in the overspeed or speeding allegations. It is important for directors and transport managers to lead by example from the Traffic Commissioner's point of view.

Conclusion

An overspeed report is a management tool which should be used to identify the most serious breaches as reported on the vehicle unit. It is not all the overspeed events that have occurred in the vehicle.

Focusing on overspeed events alone is too lacking in detail to be the main way of trying to manage individual driver performance on an ongoing basis. It cannot, however, be ignored and is something that operators need to be able to demonstrate that they have dealt with properly if called to respond to tachograph recorded overspeed events by the DVSA or OTC. ■



The driver will need to be spoken to and dealt with on any overspeed infringement

An overspeed report is a management tool which should be used to identify the most serious breaches on the vehicle

Operators must be able to show they have dealt with any tachograph recorded overspeed events by the DVSA or OTC



Do your DVS systems have VRU trajectory prediction*?

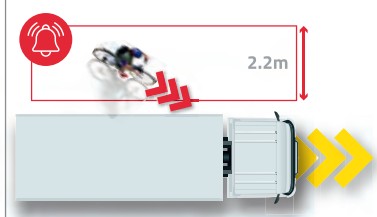
*A new requirement under TfL's latest update



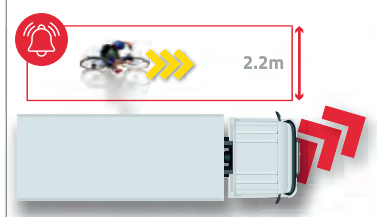
If not, contact us

Under new DVS clarifications from TfL's latest update, PSS kits should only trigger an audible and visual alarm when a collision between the vehicle and VRU is predicted.

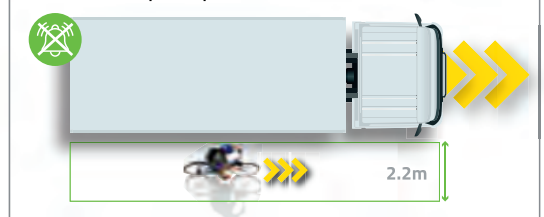
Scenario 1.a - VRU turns, collision predicted



Scenario 1.b - Vehicle turns, collision predicted



Scenario 2 - VRU parallel path



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Words: **Steve Banner**

A SHINING STAR AMONG FORS ACCREDITED OPERATORS

PDS Recovery transport chief keeps pushing
the standards higher and higher

Martina Coulstock is determined to reach the highest possible standards in her job – and is well on her way to succeeding. As Transport Manager at Bermondsey, London-based PDS Recovery, she is a FORS Advanced Practitioner.

Unveiled last autumn, the Advanced Practitioner qualification builds on the well-established FORS Practitioner training programme. To achieve Advanced status, transport managers must complete all 16 training modules offered by FORS.

A variety of topics are covered within the FORS Practitioner training portfolio, including advanced risk management, sustainable fleet operations and advanced driver training. All the modules have been developed for people in the transport industry who want to advance their professional development and demonstrate their commitment to road safety, efficiency and environmental protection.

Coulstock said: “I’ll go on any training course that I think will be useful because I want to learn as much as I can.”

In October 2023, she was one of the first people to obtain the new qualification, having become a FORS Practitioner in November 2016. Becoming an Advanced Practitioner made sense, she believes, because she was already doing more courses than she needed to.

With over 20 years’ experience in the transport industry, she joined PDS

Recovery seven years ago and promptly set about helping it achieve FORS Bronze Accreditation.

Her previous employer had reached FORS Bronze, and the basics were already there at PDS, she recalls. What was mainly required was for the firm to keep a comprehensive and easily-accessible log of what it was doing in areas such as driver daily walk-around checks.

“I ended up starting from scratch and revamped and restructured the whole system so that proper records were kept of policies and procedures and how they were being implemented,” she said.

Founded in 2009 and with another site in Erith, some 14 miles from Bermondsey, PDS operates a dozen trucks, including two 7.5-tonners on light vehicle recovery work.

Its main area of activity involves the construction industry and sites now invariably expect operators to meet the standards that FORS sets out. PDS runs tipper grabs and the jobs it undertakes involve lifting and shifting pipework for one of the country’s biggest utility companies.

“We’ve got trucks with Hiab cranes that lift the pipes out from the ground and the tipper grabs backfill,” she said.

Business progression

From FORS Bronze, the business progressed to FORS Silver – “that meant we had to up our game a little bit,” she remarked – a move that coincided with Transport for London (TfL) implementing its Direct Vision Standard (DVS). That

Construction sites now invariably expect operators to meet the standards that FORS sets out



was an important development for a business based in the capital and has been followed more recently by the introduction of the Progressive Safe System (PSS).

Much of what TfL requires for DVS compliance is mandated by FORS Silver too.

To meet PSS, PDS has had to have radar-based sensors fitted to the front and nearside of its trucks to make it easier to detect vulnerable road users such as cyclists. “They already had the rest of the equipment that is required, including the cameras,” she said.

FORS Gold was reached in March. Among other things it involves encouraging all employees to further their professional development. Involvement with FORS means making a major commitment to driver training. That means getting the drivers involved, which can sometimes be a challenge.

“Some of them can be a bit old-school and not entirely convinced that they could benefit from more training, so you have to talk to them respectfully and get them to understand why the business is doing it,” she said.

“Fortunately the ones we’ve got are a nice bunch of lads. They treat me with respect and I treat them with respect – and while some of the older ones are not that keen on new technology, the



younger ones are certainly attuned to it.”

She holds a truck driver’s licence and drives on occasions to help out if the driving team is short-handed.

“One of the reasons I got my licence was to gain a better understanding of what our guys do on a daily basis, and what is expected of them,” she said. “I think that may one reason why we have respect for one another. It certainly helps us work as a team.”

Keeping up standards

Having achieved Gold accreditation,



Coulstock is determined to ensure that PDS keeps it. That involves maintaining the required level of excellence all day, every day.

“You have to keep on top of things, and keep up to date,” she observed. “Some things in the transport industry remain the same, but others can change.”

Clearly committed to ongoing professional development, she has recently become a driver CPC trainer.

Attending FORS courses requires considerable personal commitment and while the vast majority of them can be undertaken online, they typically last three hours.

“So I work later or at the weekends if I need to get work-related paperwork done,” she said.

FORS Concession Director, Geraint Davies, is more than happy to applaud anyone willing to put in the time, trouble and effort required to reach Advanced Practitioner status. He said: “As a FORS Practitioner myself and a former transport operator, I understand the value of training and professional development in our fast-paced sector.

“FORS Practitioner has always been the standard setter for dedicated fleet professionals who want to elevate their

Left: Martina Coulstock – determined to reach the highest possible standards

I’ll go on any training course that I think will be useful because I want to learn as much as I can

career, positively impact their business, and drive standards in our industry. With the introduction of Advanced Practitioner, however, we’re once again raising the bar for road safety, efficiency and environmental protection.

“We’ve invested heavily in our training programme and the enthusiastic response we’ve had from ambitious fleet managers since we launched our latest qualification is encouraging.”

A recognition of the importance of training is of course something that is supported and endorsed by the Traffic Commissioners.

They like to see transport managers undergo periodic refresher training – and any manager who appears before them, and has not, is likely to face some searching questions. ■

Words: **Richard Simpson**

IMPERFECT ROUTES TO ZERO CARBON

Battery-electric trucks may be impractical in certain circumstances. So what are the alternatives?

Back in the 1930s, a British scientist was working on a system to counter an existential threat. He had a technology in mind that would do the job – the question was whether it could be developed to its optimum within the time and budget available.

In what became known as the ‘cult of the imperfect,’ he pronounced: “Give them the third best to go on with, the second best comes too late, the best never comes.”

The scientist was Robert Watson-Watt, the threat was Nazi Germany and the technology was the RAF’s Chain Home radar system.

History records that the first Chain Home radar station came into use in September 1938, a year later the UK was at war and a year after that the RAF was defeating the Luftwaffe in the Battle of Britain: a feat only made possible by timely completion of Watson-Watt’s ‘third-best’ Chain Home radar system.

Faced with the modern-day threat of climate change, the road transport industry is now contemplating its own ‘cult of the imperfect’. The best way to net zero is undoubtedly to switch all trucks to electric power generated by carbon neutral means.

But is it possible, practical and as affordable as is sometimes made out?

The advantages of the electric truck are obvious: near silence, ease of driving and zero emissions of greenhouse or toxic gases at the point of use.

But from an economic point of view, the challenges are considerable. It’s a given that the current electric truck

offerings cost more, carry less and can cover fewer miles without refuelling, in a shift than their diesel stablemates.

A dense network of truck-specific charge points would address these considerations: more charging points would mean there would need to be fewer heavy and expensive batteries on each vehicle and charging times would be faster. But will this ‘best’ ever come?

Confident

The electricity industry is confident that it can generate enough power to serve an electrified UK truck fleet, but serious questions remain over the distribution of that power to the points where it will be needed – and the cost of improving connections and installing chargers.

Never let it be forgotten that, even on economically efficient diesel, most haulage businesses generate profit margins in low single-figure percentage points at best. Can an already cash-strapped industry be expected to bear the increased capital cost, not only of the vehicles but the chargers and connectors?

And can a cash-strapped Government which is going to lose its revenue from fuel duty fill the gap?

There is also the question of pricing. The spike in UK electricity prices after the Russian invasion of Ukraine saw the UK’s rail freight industry quietly park up its electric locomotives as they became too expensive to operate in comparison with its diesels. Even if it is generated by renewable sources, UK electricity’s price is still coupled to wholesale fossil gas prices, so there is no incentive to use it for decarbonisation.



Above: The best way to net zero is undoubtedly to switch all trucks to electric power





Below: Robert Watson-Watt, inventor of the Chain Home radar system



Then there's the seemingly inexorable rise of artificial intelligence (AI) and the additional energy demand it will create. Mike Stark, president of Scotland's electrical trade body SELECT, warns that the demands of AI have the potential to overwhelm the grid. He said: "At present, the UK's National Grid appears to be holding its own, with current increases being met with renewable energy systems. But as technology advances and systems such as AI are introduced, there will be a time when the grid will struggle to support the demand."

Huge power demand

He estimates that there could be 1.5m AI servers in the UK by 2027. Running at full capacity, these would consume between 85 and 134 terawatt hours per year – roughly equivalent to the current energy demands of the Netherlands or Sweden. So, if the best is never going to come, what's the second best?

Hydrogen probably. It can either be used to generate electricity on the vehicle, via a fuel-cell, or burned in a

modified internal combustion engine. In the first case, the only emission is water vapour. In the second, because it's a carbon-free fuel, the exhaust gas is also water vapour, although there may be a tiny trace of other combustion gases from the small amount of lubrication oil that will inevitably be left on the combustion chamber wall to be burned each time a piston descends.

Hydrogen is, not, however, a direct replacement for diesel. To adapt a diesel design for hydrogen its compression ratio must be reduced and a spark ignition system installed. Coping with the unique characteristics of hydrogen is also a challenge: it tends to accumulate at the top of the combustion chamber, so a high-speed turbocharger is required to give the incoming charge sufficient velocity to ensure an optimum fuel-air mix.

However, these technical challenges have not prevented proponents of hydrogen combustion including Cummins and JCB from adapting diesel engines to burn the gas – and they claim



Above: Hydrogen is a 'second best' solution but is not a direct replacement for diesel

that the power and torque of the parent engine have been replicated by the hydrogen units.

Fuel cell problems

Fuel cells have proved more problematic. They are expensive to make and delicate in operation, being prone to damage by contamination and vibration. And the problems don't end there. They are also unable to operate at maximum capacity for long before they become flooded with water, so designers of fuel cell vehicles tend to specify a cell that can produce twice the vehicle's peak power requirement, then operate it at half capacity. Transient response is also poor, so practical fuel cell vehicles also require a traction battery to cope with spikes in torque demand. This battery can also be used to recover waste energy through regenerative braking, just like a conventional battery-electric vehicle.

But chemistry provides a powerful argument against fuel cell vehicles. The amount of energy required to produce 'green' hydrogen (by using renewable electricity to electrolyse the gas from water), compress and transport it, before using a fuel cell to convert it back into electricity and water, means that, according to the Institute of the Motor Industry, a fuel cell vehicle is only 22 per cent efficient: which compares badly with a battery-electric equivalent at 70 per cent efficiency.

Hydrogen can be produced by stripping

it out of a hydrocarbon such as methane, but in doing so waste carbon is produced, meaning the gas can no longer be regarded as a zero-carbon fuel.

No matter how it is produced or used, hydrogen also presents problems in storage and transportation, lacking density and being prone to leaching and leakage. The creation of a hydrogen distribution network is decades away, meaning that the gas qualifies for second best in Watson-Watt's cult of the imperfect. It could work – but making it work will take time we do not have if we are to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by the projected deadline of 2050.

Third best

So, the vast majority of operators are going to be looking for a 'third-best to be going on with', and that means either trucks they can buy now that have been adapted to run on a low or no carbon fuel, or a low or no carbon fuel that can be substituted for fossil diesel in a standard truck.

Low/no carbon fuels currently available include methane, FAME, and HVO.

Methane appears in two forms. It is either 'natural' (fossil) gas, identical to the mains gas used in domestic homes, or 'biogas' given off by decaying organic materials. They share an identical molecular structure: CH₄ (one carbon molecule attached to four hydrogen molecules). Whether natural or biogas, it is used in trucks in either liquified (LNG) or compressed (CNG) states. Different tanks and refuelling equipment are required to handle each state, so while a

gas truck can run on natural or biogas (or a blend of the two), it cannot be switched between CNG and LNG. Methane must be cooled to below -162° C to achieve liquid state, so insulated tanks are required for storage and use.

Gas trucks are currently available in the UK from Volvo, Scania and Iveco, on a limited range of engines. Volvo's offering is unique as it retains diesel compression ignition (with a small amount of diesel fuel being injected into the combustion chamber to initiate this) while Scania and Iveco use spark ignition and a lower compression ratio.

There is wide variation in the carbon footprints of biogas and natural gas. Natural gas is a fossil fuel, but it is rich in hydrogen and low in carbon, so yields a reduction in CO₂ emissions of around 10 per cent against fossil diesel.

Much greater reductions in CO₂ are possible when biogas is used. If the feedstock from which the gas is derived is an organic waste that would otherwise decay into the atmosphere, burning it in an engine actually results in a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions because methane is over 28 times more potent than CO₂ in trapping heat in the atmosphere. Hence manufacturers can claim their gas trucks are carbon neutral when run on biogas, even though CO₂ is emitted from their exhaust systems.

Operators seeking to reduce carbon emissions from existing conventional trucks are often directed towards hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO). This is a slightly misleading name for a fuel that can be produced from a wide range of vegetable and animal fats and oils which are treated through hydrogenation (adding hydrogen) or hydrocracking (breaking large molecules into smaller ones) to produce hydrocarbons from the fatty acids of the base feedstock.

The result is a high quality diesel fuel free of the impurities such as sulphur

Below: Low/no carbon fuels currently available include methane, FAME, and HVO



Above: Macdonalds runs its trucks on recycled cooking oil from its restaurants

that can be found in 'fossil' diesel and is a 'pour-in' substitute for it. Unlike fossil diesel, it is non-toxic. While it has a greater energy density by weight than pump diesel, in volumetric terms it falls behind the fossil fuel.

This means that fuel consumption will be higher in trucks running HVO, but, bizarrely, in aviation where fuel is measured in kg not litres, it's better. In terms of CO₂ emissions, its production from renewable resources means it offers a 90 per cent reduction compared to fossil diesel, while its clean combustion can also produce a reduction in other pollutants.

HVO has largely supplanted a cruder form of diesel biofuel: fatty acid methyl ester (FAME), although modern B7 pump diesel contains up to seven per cent biodiesel.

This is mostly sourced from reused cooking oils.

Private supply

Running more than seven per cent biodiesel in a modern truck engine is sometimes possible. However, it is not generally on sale, so operators will need to secure their own supply. Advice should also be sought from the truck



Fuel consumption is also higher than for 'pump' diesel, as the volumetric energy content of FAME is lower than pump diesel.

So, the negative costs and implications of any switch to FAME need to be carefully considered. That said, for companies operating in the catering and food services sector, use of FAME made from the industry's waste products provides a good example of the benefits

available now and one of which requires little or no additional capital investment in infrastructure or equipment.

The dark side of biofuel

BAs biofuels are made from food waste and crop residue, the environmental case for them is overwhelming. Material that would otherwise represent a disposal cost and hazard can be turned into fuel.

The bad side comes when demand for biofuel outstrips the supply of waste feedstocks. Even in the UK, biomethane digesters which were originally built to process animal manure are being fed with harvested maize direct from the field, without the inconvenience of passing it through a cow first.

On a global scale, the risk is that natural forests are being cleared (destroying precious habitats and releasing vast quantities of sequestered carbon dioxide and methane), to produce spurious 'green' fuel feedstocks by monoculture.

Organisations switching to HVO should ensure that the product chosen carries International Sustainability and Carbon Certification (ISCC), which is an independent certification system that rates various fuels based on their environmental effects. This will ensure the fuel meets environmental, traceability and social requirements.

In Europe, biomethane is included in the Guarantees of Origin (GOs) framework. There are currently different schemes for certification. GOs issued in the UK, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, and Austria can be transferred across borders. ■

The electricity industry is confident that it can generate enough power to serve an electrified UK truck fleet

manufacturer. Many engines will run on up to 30 per cent FAME and some will go as high as 100 per cent.

However certain key engine components and systems may need to be replaced or modified and maintenance intervals tightened to ensure more frequent changes of fuel filters and engine oils. Fuel tanks and lines, both on and off the vehicle, will also need to be modified to cope with the fuel in colder weather (FAME has a higher cold filter plugging point than even summer diesel) and bulk and vehicle tanks will have to be regularly monitored and cleaned to prevent accumulation of the black sludge that forms when bacteria in the fuel reacts with water from the atmosphere.

of a 'circular' supply chain against one which is driven by a one-way consumption model.

What is clear is that there is currently no 'magic bullet' solution to decarbonising road transport. Battery electric is like Watson-Watts' 'best' solution: the costs and constraints mean it may never be a 'one-size fits all' means of providing zero carbon transportation. The undisputed second-best, hydrogen, is still a long way off. Government remains fixated on electricity and the challenges in hydrogen transportation and storage are simply a matter of physics and beyond the control of the political classes.

Which leaves us with the third best: biogas and HVO. Both of these are

HELPING FLEETS REDUCE COSTS AND EMISSIONS

Businesses and local authorities in the resource and recycling sectors can take specific, measurable actions to reduce the running costs of their fleets while contributing to environmental goals.

Allison Transmission has developed a powertrain support programme for waste and recycling vehicle fleets that does this by addressing high fuel prices and reducing tailpipe emissions. It involves three measures of a software upgrade, reviewing transmission service intervals and specifying different axle ratios.

The potential impact of the three-pronged package – as demonstrated via a two-year initiative with Biffa, the UK's leading sustainable waste management business – is substantial because the transmission choice for so many commercial vehicle fleets operating in the waste and recycling sector is an Allison fully automatic system.

The three initiatives Allison is proactively communicating to the market are:

- Retrofitting in-service diesel engine vehicles with FuelSense 2.0 transmission software. Biffa achieved fuel savings of up to nine per cent or a £600,000 in diesel costs per year, which translates into by 1.6 million kilograms fewer carbon emissions, annually.
- Extending transmission servicing intervals can be achieved without compromising performance, efficiency, or durability. In the case of Biffa's 1,150 Allison-equipped Dennis Eagle Elite and Mercedes-Benz Econic trucks in the UK, it saved £200,000 per year and 33,500 litres of diesel.
- When specifying new vehicles, fleets can choose different axle ratios that better suit UK roads and vocational demands as well as modern fleet's fuel economy priorities. This simple adjustment costs nothing but can reduce fuel consumption and overall costs by up



to three per cent.

Steve Lea, Fleet Category Manager at Biffa Municipal, commented: "This initiative is expected to reduce carbon emissions from the Biffa fleet by 1.6 million kilograms per year and will cut our diesel bills by over £600,000 per year, fully paying back the retrofit cost of the FuelSense 2.0 software within just four months. Fuel Sense 2.0 means we can reduce fuel costs and carbon emissions with vehicles that have been in service a long time."

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Words: **Matthew Eisenegger**

FORS 'AN ABSOLUTE MUST' FOR NEW BUSINESS WINS

Transport haulier Campeys raises the standards for safety, efficiency and sustainability

Campeys of Selby has revealed that its accreditation with FORS is 'an absolute must' when in pursuit of new business wins. With more and more transport contracts specifying a demonstration of best practice, FORS continues to be the preferred accreditation scheme to help achieve benchmark levels of safety,

efficiency and sustainability.

The company, which was shortlisted for Haulier of the Year at the 2024 MT Awards, also says FORS Silver accreditation has helped raise the standard of its transport operation and helped maintain consistently high levels, particularly in terms of safety for staff, drivers, customers and vulnerable road users.

Above: FORS has become an essential ingredient in the push for new business



Above: Commercial Operations Director, Harry Campey – runs a progressive transport operation

In-house CPC training draws heavily upon content obtained from the FORS Professional training portfolio with drivers benefiting from classroom-based FORS eLearning modules.

With half of its work in the construction sector, Campeys has found that FORS is being increasingly written into tender documents, with delivery points demanding that vehicles are FORS

accredited to gain admittance on-site.

The fourth-generation haulier began its journey with FORS Bronze accreditation in 2016. Having achieved FORS Silver status in 2018, Campeys found its vehicles were already equipped with the prerequisite safety equipment to allow compliance with London's Direct Vision Standard (DVS) in 2021.

The North Yorkshire-based operation is also actively pursuing a switch to a more sustainable fleet, with its latest DAF LF Electric 19-tonner performing beyond expectations over its first 12 months of use. Over 10 per cent of its tractor unit fleet comprises biomethane (bio-CNG) vehicles from Iveco and Scania, which is part of the company's total fleet transition strategy. Campeys aims to be net-zero by 2030.

"We're a very progressive transport operation," said Commercial Operations Director, Harry Campey. "We have a single-minded view on transitioning to a carbon neutral vehicle fleet. Customers are certainly seeing zero-emissions transport as an attractive proposition for their own businesses. Behind the scenes," he added, "it is FORS that's helping us bring together the cornerstones of safety, efficiency and sustainability, especially when it comes to new business wins in the construction sector. Transport contracts invariably include a requirement for FORS accreditation, and for good reason; there's a benchmark level of operation that all operators must maintain, and we very much support the role that FORS is playing in this space." ■

Campeys has found that FORS is being increasingly written into tender documents

Right: Campeys has found its FORS accreditation an absolute must





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Words: **Richard Simpson**

DRIVE TO SURVIVE

Careful planning enables transport businesses to take triumph and disaster in their stride

A sharp drop in volume from existing customers should be taken as a warning sign that all is not well



The twin pressures of recovery from the Covid lockdown and inflationary issues following the Russian invasion of Ukraine are factors that have driven a sharp increase in insolvencies in the road transport sector.

According to a report published by accountant Price Bailey late last year using information obtained from the Government under a Freedom of Information request, the number of business failures in the industry increased by 173 per cent in a year, with at least 463 hauliers becoming insolvent in 2022/23.

The casualties included some high profile and long established companies: most notably Northamptonshire's Knights of Old, which was put out of business by a ransomware attack on its IT systems.

Releasing the report, Price Bailey identified diverse contributory factors in these failures, but primarily rising payroll and fuel costs, plus interest rate rises.

The worst of these impacts have now worked their way through the system. The increase in drivers' wages is now seen by many as a much needed

correction to a decades-long decline and has made a positive contribution towards easing the difficulties of recruitment and retention in the industry. Fuel costs have stabilised and interest rates are falling.

Significant challenges

But it would be a mistake to see these welcome changes as signalling the end of 'bad times' for the industry. Looking ahead, haulage businesses face significant challenges in an industry where profit margins are traditionally perilously low (one or two percent being normal) and credit risks high.

To paraphrase American politician and businessman Donald Rumsfeld, there are future risks we know about, those we can anticipate although their exact nature is unknown, and those we cannot even anticipate. The Russian invasion of Ukraine and its consequent impact on fuel prices and the availability of vehicles and parts are

a classic example of the latter.

So, what are the warning signs to managers and directors that their business may be at risk?

One of the first is quite simply that the phone stops ringing. All businesses experience 'churn' as existing customers are lost or fade away and a stream of new inquiries (even if most don't actually turn into new work) is an indication of a healthy business. Conversely, a sharp drop in volume from existing customers which is outside of normal seasonal fluctuations should be taken as a warning sign that all is not well.

Some transport businesses are more at risk than others. Loss of an income stream need not be fatal if overheads can be reduced in an equally rapid and proportionate manner. Trucks, for example, can be taken off the road, or even sold or returned to the finance company. However, fixed assets can rapidly become liabilities when volumes fall.

One of the first risks is quite simply that the phone stops ringing



Above: About the only thing Eddie Stobart didn't do was grow and harvest the vegetables

Warehouses are a prime example. From the 1980s onwards, many of the UK's most famous hauliers (most notably Eddie Stobart Ltd) grew by acquiring warehouses and using their fleets to transport goods in and out. Stobart also took control of the supply chain for some products, the classic example being canned vegetables.

Stobart's way

Stobart's trucks transported sheet steel to the factories which made the cans, then took the empty cans to Stobart's own warehouse for storage prior to the commencement of the harvest/canning season, then transported the cans to the canning plants and returned filled cans back to Stobart's own warehouses, where they were then stored prior to delivery to the supermarkets' RDCs as required throughout the coming year. About the only thing Stobart didn't do was grow and harvest the vegetables!

Each step added value to the product and the same trucks could be used for multiple legs of the journey to market. Special trailers even enabled Stobart trucks to transport scrap offcuts back to the steelworks from the factory that made the cans, for recycling.

Right: Fuel companies generally want paying faster than customers want to pay hauliers

Plenty of smaller hauliers followed the Stobart example and started to invest at least as much in property as they did in trucks and other mobile equipment.

The problem comes when the work dries up for whatever reason. An unused warehouse will rapidly become a liability. There is a business rates exemption for six months should a warehouse fall out of use and this time must be actively used to either repurpose or dispose of it.

Many businesses invested in storage when it was at a premium during the Covid crisis and now find themselves looking to dispose of it. They may be in for a rude awakening as with a surplus

of properties on the market, buyers are increasingly picky when it comes to factors such as energy efficiency and easy access. Sound walls and roof may not be enough to attract a buyer.

Users can smell desperation. Prices for ambient storage pre-Covid were pretty stable at around £2 per pallet per week. During Covid, this rose to £3/week, but now they have declined to £1.50/week, with the overhead remaining pretty much the same.

Exit route

One possible exit route, assuming the haulier owns the land as well as the



If they can't pay you now, the chances are that they will never be able to

building, would be to apply for planning permission for residential development. Obviously, each site's situation is unique and not all will be suitable, but the new Government is avowed to meet ambitious house building targets by developing brownfield and 'greybelt' land as a priority, meaning that some of these sites may be judged more suitable than they first seem.

Declining volumes also signal a decline in haulage rates. Some customers may wait until a contract comes up for renewal, but others may point to lower diesel prices, for example, and demand an adjustment in their favour regardless. Fortunately, the post-Brexit disappearance of low-cost foreign hauliers undertaking cabotage means the argument 'others will do it if you won't'

Below: Tomorrow's big challenge is decarbonisation

holds rather less water than it once did.

It is all too easy when dealing with today's crisis to lose all sight of tomorrow's challenges. Prime among these is decarbonisation.

Under pressure

The Government ban on the sale of new heavy-duty diesel trucks in 2040 is still years away but some operators may find themselves under pressure to at least partly electrify their operations ahead of this. Large companies are starting to focus on their Scope Three CO₂ emissions: the carbon emissions made by third parties such as haulage contractors on their behalf.

This is both a threat and an opportunity. The threat is that hauliers will feel forced into investing in expensive and comparatively unproductive electric trucks and their supporting infrastructure. The

opportunity is to persuade the customer to contribute towards the increased upfront capital cost of the same while retaining as much of the increased margin from their lower cost of operation as possible. Or can the customer be convinced that for a small increase in fuel cost, which they can cover, you can reduce your fuel carbon footprint by 90 per cent overnight by switching trucks to HVO?

But the wider question of transitioning to electric trucks needs investigating now.

Those who don't own the freehold on their premises, or the grid in the locality is incapable of supporting sufficient chargers for the fleet, then decisions need to be taken promptly.

Is it worth relocating to a more suitable location, or should firms plan an exit not just from the premises but the business as a whole?

Our industry is currently going through





Above: Managing a capital-intensive small enterprise has been compared with running a bath with the plug out

a period of consolidation with medium-size companies absorbing small ones, mid-size enterprises being taken over by national concerns and the big national players such as Wincanton being taken over by multinationals like GXO. Selling while there is still something worth selling could be the best strategy for some, while investing in acquisitions to achieve a critical mass could be better for others.

For a family enterprise, much depends on the family's own circumstances: are the next generation keen to take control of the business and grow it, or would they rather secure a financial legacy now and go on to do something else?

Cash flow

Many small and medium-size hauliers go out of business not because they are unprofitable but because they run out of money. Managing a capital-intensive small enterprise has been compared with running a bath with the plug out: unless water is coming out of the taps faster than it is going down the drain, then failure is inevitable.

An eagle eye must be kept on creditors and debtors: a classic example being that fuel companies generally want paying faster than customers want to pay hauliers.

A healthy cash reserve is essential in managing peaks and troughs in cash flow. This has to be on top of the financial reserve that operators are required to retain as part of their Operator's Licence requirements.

It's always tempting to let an otherwise good customer slip behind with their payments for risk of causing an upset, but it should be remembered that if they can't pay you now as agreed, the chances are that they will never be able to. You can't let your own business be pulled down by the failings of others, so controlling the credit you extend has to be front and centre of the business.

Cash flow predictions need to be projected forwards by at least three months to ensure survival and a careful eye kept on the finances of current and potential clients. This can be done via agencies such as Dun & Bradstreet that provide credit scores and ratings that will identify companies likely to pay late or not at all.

Never assume that a company that was a good payer last year will continue to be a good payer next year. A lot can change in a business in a very short time.

SWOT analysis

A SWOT analysis is an excellent tool for assessing the health of a business. Internal and external factors can be assessed at being strengths, weaknesses,

opportunities, or threats, and acted on accordingly.

A business looking to expand should seek to align its identified internal strengths with external opportunities, while those in a defensive mode should seek to identify where internal weaknesses align with external threats and eliminate them.

On a positive note, threats can be transformed into opportunities by taking appropriate action, while training or reorganisation can change weaknesses into strengths.

If threats and weaknesses cannot be transformed or eliminated, then action should be taken to minimise their potential impact on the organisation.

Similar techniques can be applied to assessing rival companies and potential or actual customers. A customer's strength or a rival's weakness can be an opportunity, while a customer's weakness or a rival's strength can be a potential threat.

However, the SWOT technique can only function if there is clear and honest communication both up and down within an organisation. At an individual basis, people who can be honest about their own strengths and weaknesses are in themselves a strength to the organisation, while those who are not are a weakness and a potential threat to its function. ■

Words: **Claire McKie**, Associate Director, Backhouse Jones Solicitors

WHY HONESTY IS ALWAYS THE BEST POLICY

The implications of fundamental lying when making a claim



Courts can and will make robust findings on fundamental dishonesty



Whiplash claims are a common cause of dishonesty

In a recent case *Williams-Henry v Associated British Ports Holdings Ltd*, the claimant was found to be fundamentally dishonest. In previous similar cases the claimant may have recovered damages for the legitimate aspect of the claim due to a 'substantial injustice'. However the judge in this case, considering all factors, found there was no substantial injustice and the claimant was awarded nothing.

The claimant in this case would have been awarded £596,704 for injuries sustained following an accident. However, the judge considered all the factors and found her fundamentally dishonest within the meaning of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 section 57. He considered in applying the guidelines below in determining the case

that she would not suffer a substantial injustice and awarded her nothing for damages. This was in an effort to stamp out dishonesty but further this particular claimant was unrepentant and also sought to defraud the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP).

The judge, in determining whether there was a substantial injustice, considered:

- If the dishonest damages claimed were small or moderate compared to the size of the assessed genuine damages.
- The scope and depth of that dishonesty – widespread and gross dishonesty was more weighty against substantial injustice than moderate or minor dishonesty.
- The effect of the dishonesty on the construction of the claim by the Claimant

and the destruction/defence of the claim by the Defendant. That would be measured by considering all matters including the costs consequences of the work done in relation to the dishonesty compared with the work done had there been no dishonesty.

- The scope and level of the claimant's assessed genuine disability caused by the defendant.
- If depriving the claimant of damages would transfer the cost of care to the NHS, social services and the taxpayer generally and that would be more unjust than if the claimant had, for instance, a mild or moderate whiplash injury.
- The nature and culpability of the defendant's tort. A serious criminal offence was more culpable than mere momentary inadvertence.



The claimant was unrepentant and also sought to defraud the Department of Work and Pensions

The judge should consider what it would do in relation to costs if the claim was not dismissed i.e. whether the court would award most of the trial and/or pre-trial costs to the defendant in any event because fundamental dishonesty had been proven.

Also, whether the claimant would have to pay some or all of their own lawyers' costs out of damages if the claim was not dismissed.

If the genuine damages to be received by the claimant would be substantially reduced or erased by the adverse costs awards, then it is less likely that substantial injustice would be caused by the dismissal.

Each case, therefore, turns on its own merits, but it is clear the courts can and will make robust findings on fundamental dishonesty. ■

Words: **Matthew Eisenegger**

MEET SCANIA'S GREEN GIANT

Trucks prove the most environmentally-friendly in
annual Green HGV comparison test

Below: The Södertälje-based manufacturer has won and been named 'Green Truck' for seven out of the last eight tests



Below: Scania has scored nine wins in total, four second places and one fifth place



Each year, all the manufacturers of heavy trucks in Europe are invited to the Green Truck comparison test. It is organised by two German trade magazines to identify the most transport-efficient long-haul truck. Apart from a brief hiccup in 2023 – when Scania came second – the Södertälje-based manufacturer has won and been named ‘Green Truck’ for seven out of the last eight tests. In fact, Scania has won the test nine out of the 14 times that it has been held since the competition began in 2011 – an impressive feat.

“Scania participates in many press tests in Europe, but the Green Truck Award really focuses on what is an absolute core requirement in our industry – offering customers the best possible transport efficiency,” said Stefan Dorski, senior vice-president and head of Scania Trucks. “Our Super-based powertrain was introduced in 2021 and brought a

new performance level to the market, with its 8 per cent fuel savings that our customers now benefit from in their daily operations.”

The annual Green Truck test is organised by the magazines *Trucker* and *VerkehrsRundschau*. It began in 2011 and has been held 14 times. So far, Scania has scored nine wins in total, four second places and one fifth place (in the very first year). No other brand is even close to Scania’s track record.

“Ah, the fifth place – that happened long before my tenure started,” said a smiling Dorski. “Seriously though, we at Scania are very proud and happy at having regained the title as the most efficient long-haul truck in the world. Consuming less fuel means that our trucks contribute a lot for curbing CO₂ emissions, since so much of the world’s transports is still dependent on combustion engines.”

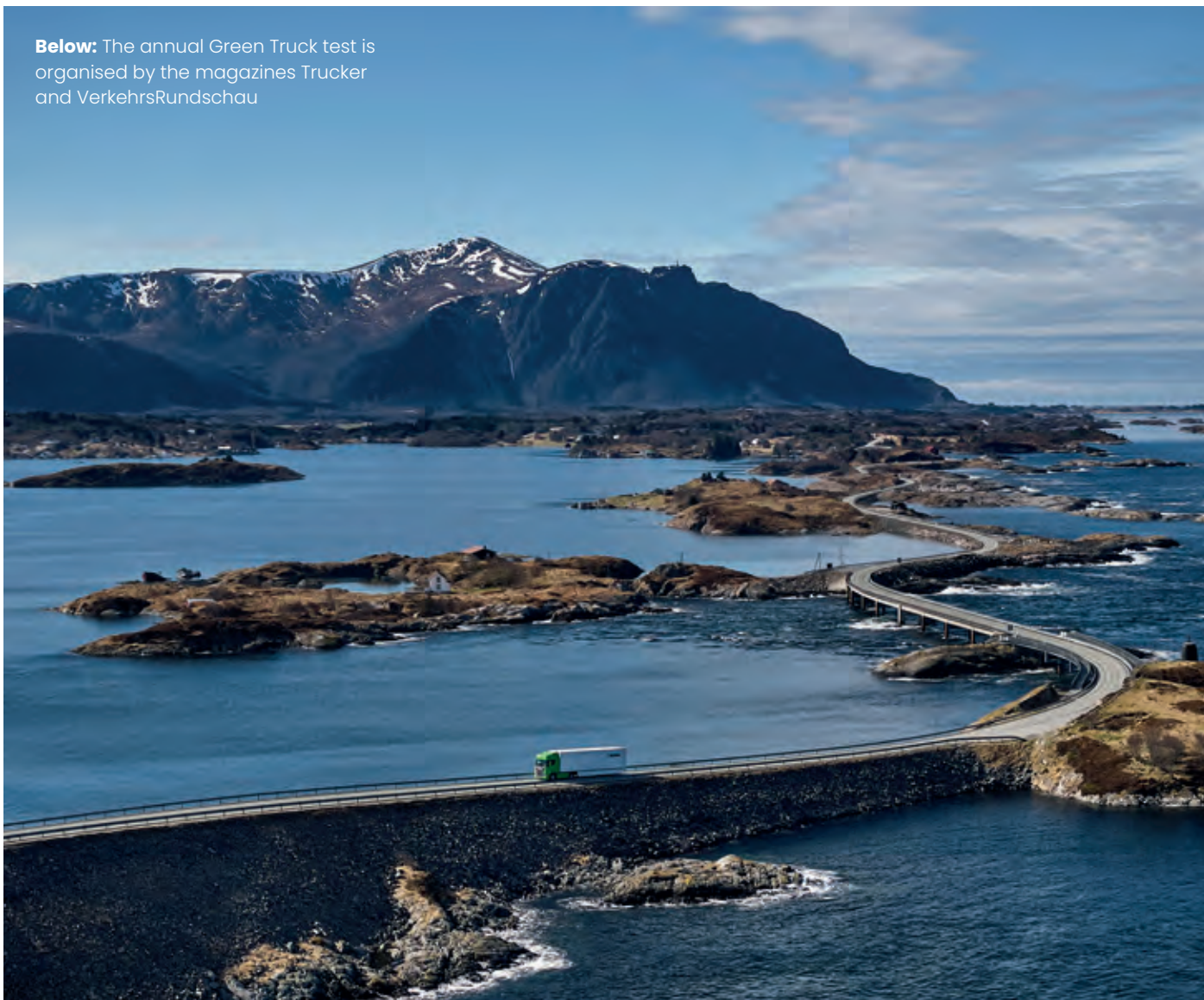
The best truck in the test is identified by applying a clever formula that covers all the relevant aspects of being

The Green Truck Award really focuses on what is an absolute core requirement in our industry

transport-efficient and sustainable: fuel consumption, average speed, used AdBlue volume and the weight of the truck (the lighter the better).

And when one takes a closer look at

Below: The annual Green Truck test is organised by the magazines Trucker and VerkehrsRundschau



the actual data that are used in the Green Truck formula, Scania's results stand out: over 100km distance, the average difference compared to the runner-up is 0.41 litres of fuel.

Taking into perspective the fact that a long-haul truck travels something like 150,000km each year, this makes Scania's more than 600 litre per year better off than the nearest competitor. At 7,040 kg, the Scania truck was also the lightest vehicle and achieved the highest average speed, at 79.70 km/h. Scania also introduced an updated version of its CCAP system (Cruise Control with Active Prediction) in May 2023, something that is believed to have given an edge in the test.

The actual testing takes place on various types of roads (though mainly motorways) in the Munich area. Everything is closely monitored by the organisers and by staff from the participating manufacturers. A reference

truck is always used to compensate for changing conditions such as head winds, rain and temperature. ■

Below: The actual testing takes place on various types of roads (though mainly motorways) in the Munich area





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Specifically, this auto braking feature ensures a reliable stoppage, surpassing the limitations of merely applying the park brake. This proves especially crucial in sectors where drivers contend with multiple responsibilities while reversing or manoeuvring, such as overseeing crew movement or ensuring pedestrian and road user safety.

Moreover, the system's adaptability extends to forward motion, activating below a predetermined and adjustable speed threshold. For instance, in scenarios like road sweeping, where drivers need to monitor the kerb line while being conscious of their surroundings, this feature proves immensely beneficial.

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| • Preservation of Fleet Reputation | |

Considering these merits, it is strongly advocated that certain industries, including waste management with bin lorries, road sweeping, road rolling, and tar spraying, make radar auto braking technology a mandatory inclusion in their vehicle fleets. Local authorities are urged to consider and prioritize this advancement for their vehicle fleets, ensuring a safer operational environment for all.

If you would like to contact us to discuss in more detail on any of the above, you can do so by phone on [01785 714447](tel:01785714447) or you can email sales@air-brake.com



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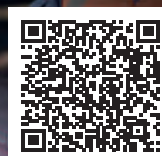
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For 2024, Vision UK is offering safety equipment meeting the requirements of DVS, FORS and CLOCS schemes, to provide a higher level of assistance than is required by the guidelines



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Words: **Steve Banner**

CARRYING THE SAFETY MESSAGE TO AFRICA

UK charity Transaid is supporting a truck driver training school in Zambia as just one of its African projects



Left: New drivers are given training in safety and maintenance procedures

The challenges associated with improving safety standards among haulage and distribution fleets in the UK should never be underestimated. Yet they pale into insignificance when compared with the hazards associated with operating trucks in Zambia in sub-Saharan Africa.

Drivers' hours rules are just about non-existent, maintenance standards are poor to say the least and overloading is rife. Cargo is regularly roped and sheeted and an often slipshod approach to load security means that whatever is being transported can end up hanging off either one side of the truck or the other.

Highway maintenance, meanwhile, is hit and miss. The Great North Road, a key artery which links the country's capital, Lusaka, with the border with Tanzania, is peppered with huge potholes that look capable of swallowing a bus. In some places, the Tarmac disappears altogether.

Road signs are a rare sight and road

markings and cats' eyes are non-existent. Driving at night is a hair-raising experience, with other vehicles not always properly lit, cyclists not having lights at all and pedestrians showing an alarming tendency to wander out into the road, seemingly unaware of the danger they face.

In a bid to reduce the number of serious accidents, the Zambian government has introduced a 10pm to 5am curfew on truck movements. Unfortunately, this is not always observed.

Many drivers start out as so-called 'lorry boys', doing all the fetching and carrying for the driver and helping with roping and sheeting. Sometimes, they take control of trucks when drivers are incapable of doing so themselves.

Action over crisis

UK charity Transaid has long been aware of Zambia's highway transport safety crisis and is doing something about it. Along with a group of well-known UK

transport operators, it is supporting the efforts of a truck driver training school in Zambia, along with many other projects in the continent.

The Industrial Training Centre in Lusaka is a non-profit-making body which comes under Zambia's Ministry of Technology and Science.

The ITC receives Zambian government funding along with revenue from the training fees it charges. As a consequence, it has sufficient income to meet its overheads, but not enough to buy training vehicles.

ITC chief executive officer, Lloyd Mbasela, said: "We've got the trainers, but we don't have enough trucks. We could do with ten more."

This is where British transport fleets come in. Malcolm Group, Fagan & Whalley and Samworth Brothers are among those companies that have donated seven- or eight-year-old trucks that would otherwise be disposed of on the second-hand market to the school.

Thanks largely to the efforts of Transaid and its UK supporters, ITC can now call on a training fleet made up of ten tractor units, three trailers, five rigid and three coaches and buses, plus a driving simulator. With four forklift trucks, the centre offers forklift driver training too.

Malcolm Group logistics divisional managing director, Jim Haldane, said: "We'll be giving ITC one or two more vehicles within the next 12 to 18 months." He was among a number of UK executives who recently visited the training operation to learn more about its work.

Technology embraced

Modern onboard technology is beginning to be embraced by the ITC. Two of the tractor units gifted by Fagan & Whalley

and Samworth Brothers in 2023 have been equipped with a tracking system by Microlise and cameras by Brigade Electronics. The latter are there to enhance the driver's view down both sides of the vehicle and to eliminate blind spots.

ITC training manager, Albert Banda, said: "Being able to use cameras has undoubtedly altered our approach to training."

There is no shortage of demand for the courses the ITC offers. It trains 100 learner truck drivers a month and is usually booked up way ahead. Training to obtain a Class C licence to drive a truck grossing at up to 16 tonnes takes 20 days. Going for a Class CE licence to drive an artic takes a further 15 days.

Tests are conducted by Zambia's Road Transport and Safety Agency, with ITC trainees achieving an 80 per cent to 90 per cent first-time pass rate. Most of the remainder pass second time around after additional training.

A truck driver's job is an appealing one in Zambia, despite the challenges involved and the undoubted safety risks. The typical monthly wage is 9,000 Zambian kwacha (£260) and sometimes more. That compares favourably with an average wage of 6,000 kwacha (£175) a month for workers in most other skilled or semi-skilled trades.

One issue the ITC is having to face is that the second-hand UK trucks coming its way are increasingly arriving with automated transmissions. Zambian hauliers are still wedded to manual transmissions, however, and those who pass their tests with an automated box are not licensed to drive a manual.

So, the ITC is husbanding its resources by using automated models to show trainees how to steer and brake and to familiarise them with handling a big vehicle in what is often chaotic traffic. Once they have proved themselves competent, they are allowed behind the wheel of a manual truck to get used to swapping cogs.

Transaid's other activities include helping to improve access to mental health services and assisting with the battle against malaria in rural areas. It has been active in several sub-Saharan countries including Uganda, Ghana, Mozambique and Tanzania as well as Zambia.

It arranges for the donation of bicycle ambulances to isolated Zambian villages. Earlier this year, it helped



Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal visited Multimodal 2024 at the NEC earlier this year

Princess Royal shows her continuing support for Transaid

Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal visited Multimodal 2024 at the NEC earlier this year, in her capacity as patron of Transaid. Caroline Barber, chief executive of Transaid, said: "Multimodal is a hugely important event in our calendar and it was fantastic for our patron to join us and talk about Transaid with so many of our corporate partners and supporters. As one of the three founders of Transaid more than 25 years ago, few people can talk as passionately about our work, or have visited as many of our projects and seen the positive impact we have on local communities."

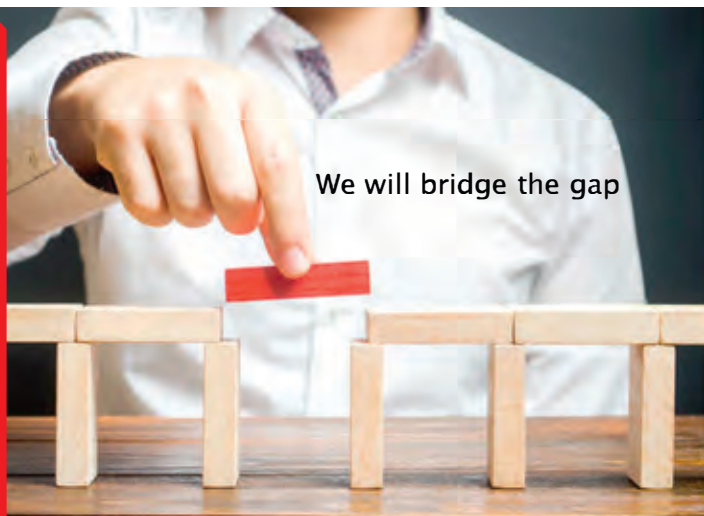
organise the donation of eight of them to communities around Serenje, some 250 miles from Lusaka.

A bicycle ambulance consists of a single-axle canopied trailer on which the patient lies towed by a robust bicycle

called a Buffalo, ridden by an unpaid volunteer. It is the only way seriously ill villagers can get to hospital and involves them being pedalled down rough rural tracks for many miles in all weathers, sometimes in the dark. ■



Right: New drivers are given training in safety and maintenance procedures



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12

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POWER PARKS PERK UP ELECTRIC TRUCK CHARGING PLANS

New initiative will help transport firms on their road to net zero

A UK-wide network of gigawatt-scale power parks, including electric HGV charging hubs, is being developed by UK energy specialist Relode.

With electricity demand expected to more than double between now and 2050, the specialist electricity infrastructure developer will open up gigawatt-scale grid connections at 15 sites.

Each power park will feature a substation and associated cabling to bring electricity to the site, plus an electric HGV charging hub offering a combination of rapid and overnight charging for 50-plus vehicles.

Working closely with National Grid and distribution network operators, the company will invest ahead of need at strategic locations to accelerate net zero.

Mikey Clark, CEO at Relode, said: “Electrification is the fastest, most economical way we have to decarbonise our world, but the scale of the challenge cannot be overstated.

“We have just a few short decades in which to super-charge our grid and deliver the infrastructure needed to meet the coming explosion in electricity demand.

“To succeed, we need all hands on deck. Working in partnership with network operators, Relode will invest at critical junctures of electricity demand to help some of our most energy-intensive industries secure the power they need to transition to a clean, electric future.

“Our network of gigawatt-scale power parks will catalyse clean growth, drive investment and enable businesses to electrify their operations.”

The news comes at a time when a new

survey by EV payment specialist Paythru, carried out in partnership with the EV Café, found many frustrations that need to be addressed if more people are to choose electric vehicles.

The analysis of 200 EV users found they still use multiple payment methods, despite an often-stated preference for universal solutions. Only 13 per cent of people have a single payment option they use all the time.

Most have three or more regular options that they switch between, such as contactless and a couple of different apps, each making up less than a quarter of their overall usage.

“This level of variation suggests the majority of users are being forced to use multiple payment options to navigate an overly complex charging system,” said Sara Sloman, Paythru’s Chief Strategy Officer.

The survey also reveals a high level of

problems at the charger. Almost nine in 10 respondents said they’ve had to download a new app at the charging point in order to pay. A total of 80 per cent have faced app payment problems due to mobile connectivity issues and more than half have had their cards rejected. Furthermore, 45 per cent said they’ve had to phone up to make a payment and 61 per cent have left the charge point because of it.

Pre-authorisation – where money is reserved against a payment card, with the charge then deducted – is a major bugbear. Some 90 per cent said they have been asked for pre-authorisation when charging and 80 per cent have experienced at least one issue with it. ■

Below: New plans for a network of power parks could help speed up the electrification of Britain’s trucks



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The Disc-Lock Safety Wheel Nut has an unblemished 20-year history as the only wheel nut in the world that is guaranteed never to come loose. The system is a simple one – interlocking cams rise against each other to create a wedging effect that locks the assembly together and maintains tension. Joint integrity is guaranteed and once installed, the fastener remains fully secure.

Disc-Lock Europe is a wholly owned subsidiary of Tension Control Bolts Ltd (TCB), the world leader in high strength bolting, founded in 1984. It has supplied high strength bolts to some of the most prestigious structures globally. Well-known projects include the Forth Bridge in Scotland, the West Gate Bridge in Melbourne, the Olympic Stadium in London, the U Arena in Paris, the ADIC Tower in Abu Dhabi and The Shard in London.

Since its acquisition in 2015, Disc-Lock Europe Ltd has benefited from TCB's technological expertise and today, all Disc-Lock Safety Wheel Nuts and HRD Loc-Nuts are coated in Greenkote. This is the environmentally-friendly coating system used by TCB and is the preferred choice of main contractors and steel fabricators alike.

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Vans and Light Commercials

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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Employers have a duty to minimise the risk of incidents

For some time there has been a gradual increase in reports of substance use impacting the workplace. This includes both legal and illegal drugs, as well as alcohol consumption, all of which have the potential to impact employee safety.

In safety-critical working environments such as the transport and logistics industries, it is vital for companies to take the issue seriously. It is therefore not surprising that increasing numbers of businesses looking to reduce risks in fleet management are considering extending their company policies to include both a drug and alcohol policy and a safe driving policy.

In addition, many are also implementing impairment screening and testing programmes. Not only does this type of programme promote safer working for drivers, but as impairment significantly increases the risks of an incident, they also improve safety for passengers, other road users and the general public.

Below: Employees are becoming familiar with the concept of oral fluid testing

The European Transport Safety Council estimates that if a driver has a body alcohol content of 1.5gm/litre, the injury crash rate is 22 times that of a sober driver.

One significant element of this type of approach means that professional drivers would be included in testing programmes. Most people are familiar with the impact of drinking and driving but increasingly statistics and research indicate an increased prevalence for drug driving.

It's important to recognise that prescription medicines, such as benzodiazepines (which treat common medical issues such as depression), have the potential to impair the person taking them, and in turn, the potential to impact safety in the workplace.

Common side effects from such drugs can include drowsiness, dizziness, loss of balance, confusion or memory loss. Clearly this type of side effect has a real and practical impact, particularly if an employee is responsible for driving a vehicle. It is therefore vital that individuals are given appropriate support and that they keep taking their medication, while sensitively – but

robustly – managing any possible risks to workplace safety.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is clear that all employers have a legal duty to protect employees' health, safety and welfare. Having a drug and alcohol policy which tests for all substances that have the potential to impair colleagues' safety is increasingly seen as an important part of fulfilling this obligation and protecting all employees.

Since the pandemic and the introduction of lateral flow and polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing for Covid, employers and employees are becoming more familiar with the concept of oral fluid testing and one way of introducing drug testing into the workplace is by using such techniques that offer fast and less invasive tests.

Dräger is proud to partner with Driving for Better Business, a Government-backed National Highways programme that helps employers in both the private and public sectors reduce work-related road risk. ■

For more information on Dräger drug and alcohol testing, visit [draeger.com](https://www.draeger.com)




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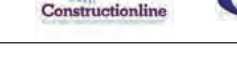
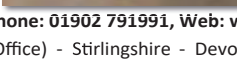
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