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Issue 26, September 2016 www.tradevandriver.com

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Finance subject to status. Guarantees/indemnities may be required. You will not own the vehicle at the end of the agreement. Examples exclude VAT and are based on 36 month non-maintained agreements, profile 6+35 payment in advance of 6 monthly rentals, followed by 35 monthly rentals, with a mileage of 10,000 miles per annum. Vehicles must be returned in good condition and within agreed mileage, otherwise further charges will be incurred. Prices correct at time of going to print and are subject to change without notice. Subject to availability at a Ford Authorised UK Dealer for vehicles with finance accepted and vehicle contracted between 1st September and 30th September 2016. Not available with any other promotion. Ford Lease is provided by ALD Automotive Ltd, trading as Ford Lease, BS16 3JA.



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Brexit: shut up and get used to it!

I don't know about you lot, but personally I am thoroughly sick and tired of hearing about the Brexit! Immediately after the result was announced, the 'Remainers' started churning out report after report warning about how terrible things were going to be for the UK economy and how we were all going to hell in a handcart any time now.

Well, in my neck of the woods, life is going on very much as it was earlier in the year – apart from the fact that some of my friends got fewer dollars and euros for their pounds when they went on holiday.

Roofs still need repairing, drains are still getting blocked and parcels are still being delivered. In other words, absolutely nothing has changed and the economy is still booming. And that means my readers are still earning their living much as they did before.

I believe things will change dramatically but I just wish those who voted to remain would accept the verdict of the people and put their backs behind our new prime minister's efforts to forge a new future for this wonderful country we live in. As for me – I'm quite looking forward to the challenges ahead.



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SsangYong upgrades Rexton commercial

SsangYong has launched a new Rexton van complete with 2.2-litre Euro 6 engine and priced at £19,495 on the road.

The new vehicle is built on a steel ladder chassis and has a 3.0-tonne towing capacity.

With the newly-developed e-XDi220 turbodiesel engine, maximum power is increased to 178bhp and torque to 295lb-ft. Maximum torque is delivered from 1,400rpm and maintained through a wide range up to 2,800rpm for smooth driving from the low revs.

Big strides have been made with CO2 emissions, which have been reduced to 184g/km, while fuel economy is also improved and now up to 40.4mpg on the combined cycle.

Meanwhile, the cabin has been given a refreshed new look. Aluminium-effect and chrome finishes have been added and the list of standard equipment now includes cruise control, air-conditioning, electrically-operated windows and heated door mirrors, leather covered steering wheel and gear knob and CD & RDS radio with iPod and Bluetooth connectivity.



SsangYong Rexton van – myriad of upgrades

DfT announces £19m funding to help fleets with green vans

Transport Minister Andrew Jones has announced a £19 million funding pot to help commercial vehicle fleets adopt the latest in low and zero emission vehicle technologies.

Now open for bids, the scheme will be funded by the Office for Low Emission Vehicles (OLEV) through Innovate UK, and will be open to SMEs as well as large fleets. Part of the funds will also go towards new alternative fuel infrastructure such as electric vehicle charge points.

Jones said: "We are always looking at new ways to make the vehicles on our roads cleaner and this funding will support the freight industry to embrace the latest technology.

"The UK's low emission vehicle

industry is a huge success story and a source of strength in our economy. This announcement is further proof that the government is leading the way as global demand for these vehicles grows."

Speaking at the Low Carbon Vehicle Partnership annual conference, Andrew Jones also announced a low carbon HGV technology accreditation scheme, which will provide fleet operators with an independent validation of how much fuel they could save by adopting the latest retrofit technologies onto their existing vehicles. Although currently aimed at HGVs primarily, LowCVP managing director Andy Eastlake has said it would work for vans in some operations.

End is nigh for Citroen Nemo/Peugeot Bipper

The death knell has sounded for the Citroen Nemo and Peugeot Bipper after it was revealed that the two firms will not be taking the facelifted model from maker Fiat.

These two vans are clones of the Fiat Fiorino but while PSA Group will be taking the upgraded Euro 6 engines, the old model will remain "for a couple of years" before being scrapped.

Citroen's UK LCV chief Jeremy Smith said the decision had been made due to Nemo's lack of financial viability. He said the bigger Berlingo achieves better residual values than the Nemo and added: "You can contract hire a Berlingo for less than a Nemo."

Nick Crossley, head of business sales at Peugeot, said: "The Bipper

will absorb the Euro 6 engines but not the facelift. The RVs are not enough to invest in the facelift."

Crossley predicted Peugeot would cover the gap left in its portfolio by the departure of the Bipper by extending its next Partner model range.

"We have plans to develop a new Partner – it would be sensible to develop a vehicle to cover the Bipper," he said.



Special edition sees Merc loading up Sprinter

Following the success of the 20th anniversary edition of the Mercedes-Benz Sprinter last year, the German manufacturer has revealed yet another special – the Premium edition.

Available at 3.0 and 3.5 tonnes gross vehicle weight across all engine variants, the special van will offer in addition to the standard spec an integrated Becker satnav system, chrome effect radiator grille, colour screen infotainment system, air-conditioning, comfort driver's seat, an outside temperature gauge and special wheel trims.

In addition, Sprinter Premium Edition also benefits from Crosswind Assist, which supports the driver in strong, gusty side winds through automatic brake interventions, Adaptive brake light to indicate a critical braking manoeuvre, Adaptive ESP, the dynamic control system that also takes vehicle load into account and Rescue Assist QR code stickers, which gives emergency services critical information at the



scene of an accident.

Long wheelbase hi-roof versions are available for business users with a £19,171 deposit plus £379 per month for two years.

Firms waste thousands per year over unnecessary breakdowns

Firms running van and HGV fleets could be losing more than £7,000 a year per vehicle through vehicles being off the road due to breakdown.

That's the finding of new research published by the RAC as it launches a new fixed-price product to help manage breakdown costs

The survey of 500 businesses ranging in size from SME to large corporates, found 41% of firms that run commercial vehicles (3.5t vans up to 44t HGVs) suffer vehicles off the road due to breakdown at least twice a month.

In addition 32% say breakdown costs their business up to £300 a day, giving businesses a worst-case bill of £7,200 every year.

Meanwhile 43% of those surveyed said one in four breakdowns they deal with in their fleet could have been prevented if reported earlier.

RAC Truck Rescue manager Matt Dallaway said: "RAC Truck Rescue is a specialist part of the RAC which specifically looks after vans, trucks and HGVs, managing more than 100,000 truck incidents a year and attending around 300,000 vans at roadside.

Top concern

"Managing cash flow is the top concern for every business which is why at the RAC we've looked at doing things differently for commercial fleets when it comes to payment models.

"Traditionally truck fleet managers have paid on use for their breakdown cover, but that is a cost that can escalate if we have a harsh winter or if you happen to have a run of incidents.

"The RAC now offers customers an annual subscription fixed cost for commercial breakdown cover, which means they know exactly what they are paying for each vehicle in their fleet every year, with cover for up to four breakdowns.

"Not only does this benefit cash flow and service, maintenance and repair (SMR) costs, but also provides peace of mind as it's our job to make sure those vehicles get to where they're going and keep the wheels of the business moving."



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VW expands van centre network

Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles has expanded its nationwide network to 98 outlets, comprising 73 full dedicated Van Centres and 25 additional Authorised Repairers. The opening of sites in the Channel Islands and relocation in Hull, along with considerable investment in Norwich, are part of the brand's commitment to delivering the best customer experience.

The new sites offer a wide range of new and approved used Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles as well as an extensive suite of aftersales services. The new standalone facility in Hull has seen the JCT 600 Group invest in the site to offer an impressive showroom facility, which includes a large California area. Major investment by Robinsons Van Centre in Norwich

has seen the site transformed. The redevelopment has created a much larger facility that will help to enhance the customer experience as well as offering additional room

for the service team and greater car parking spaces at the Van Centre.

Richard Blunden, national network development manager for Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles, said: "The new and transformed sites in our network ensure we can provide the best levels of service to our customers. The recent growth in the network demonstrates the ongoing confidence our investors have in the Volkswagen Commercial



Vehicles brand. Volkswagen Van Centre staff nationwide deliver practical advice for fleet managers and business owners on all aspects of van ownership, with workshops fitted with specialist tools and equipment to keep vehicles in the best condition."

A full range of parts and accessories at centres ensures customers can cost-effectively operate with minimal downtime.

Do YOU pay tax on private van usage?

The tax implications of employees driving company vans for private use are being highlighted in a new campaign intended to help van operators avoid penalties from HMRC.

The campaign is being run by vehicle tracking and fleet management technology specialist ABAX to warn van fleet operators that they could be at risk of tax penalties of up to £3,000 if they aren't operating in line with the HMRC's rules and requirements.

Examples include using company vans for things like taking mates to a football match or going to the supermarket.

The campaign follows a recent ABAX/YouGov survey that revealed 56% of employees who drive a vehicle for business purposes were unaware of the tax regime for reclaiming business mileage.

It also revealed that 70% of business owners don't fully understand the tax implications



that surround mileage claims.

This is supported by HMRC's Booklet 480 which includes the statement that when no vehicle benefit is declared on an employee's P11D, HMRC requires the business to demonstrate that no private use has taken place.

Failure to provide information of sufficient detail or quality to

support the declaration on the P11D can result in a £3,000 fine for poor record keeping, a requirement to repay all taxes and national insurance owed on the van, with the further possibility of a fine of up to 100% of the amount owed. Further still, HMRC can backdate the fines, penalties and tax owed, with interest payable, for six years.

ABAX UK chief executive Chris Miller said: "At ABAX we know it's not easy to keep track of all the tax authority's rules and requirements and our fully automated ABAX Triplog can help protect your team and company, saving time and money."

"The ABAX Triplog follows the recommendations from HMRC regarding mileage claims for personal and company cars, so you can be sure you are on the right side of any tax penalties."

The ABAX campaign features digital advertising and radio advertising on talkSPORT.



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VW reveals first images of new Crafter

The first sketches of the new Volkswagen Crafter, which is due to be launched this autumn, have been revealed. Clearly displaying Volkswagen's design DNA and conceived as the 'big brother' of the T-series, the all-new Crafter promises innovation, plus a high level of functionality and quality.

The new Crafter is a completely new vehicle. Experts at Volkswagen Commercial vehicles have worked closely with current customers, frequently accompanying them during their daily routines, to explore their needs and find out their visions of what they wanted the new Crafter to be. More details will be published in due course.



Toyota launches new LCV business centres

Toyota is launching a network of Specialist Business Centres for its renewed LCV range following the launch of the new Hilux pick-up and Proace van.

The centres will be located across the UK and will be staffed with specialist teams and equipped to provide dedicated sales and aftersales services for the new model line-up. The new vehicles will be on display and available for test drives and the centres will

be able to discuss and organise any requirements for specific accessories or vehicle conversions.

Gareth Matthews, Toyota GB LCV manager, said: "The new Specialist Business Centres are a key element in the complete renewal of our LCV operations in the UK. We are introducing fantastic new products with Hilux and Proace, so it's critical that we reflect their quality and appeal with first-class, specialist customer service."



New Hilux - available at new business centres

Navara goes Euro 6

The Nissan Navara, already the holder of the International Pick-up Award 2016, has now switched to a more advanced and eco-friendly Euro 6 engine.

The upgrade covers both the 190bhp twin-turbo and 160bhp single turbo versions of the Navara's 2.3-litre dCi diesel engine.

It has made a significant difference to the pick-up's environmental performance – a vital consideration for buyers because it affects running costs. CO2 emissions now start from as low as 159 g/km, a reduction of 8g/km on the predecessor Euro 5 engine. It's an enhancement which makes the Nissan Navara the best in its class. Fuel consumption on the official combined cycle has improved to 46.3mpg, up by 1.4mpg.

The new models benefit from a reduction in oxides of nitrogen (NOx) thanks to the addition of a Selective Catalytic Reduction (SCR) system. An AdBlue tank has also been fitted.

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Fuel consumption figures for the Fullback range in mpg (l/100km): Combined from 37.7 (7.5) – 44.1 (6.4). CO2 emissions 169g/km – 196g/km. Fuel consumption and CO2 figures based on standard EU tests for comparative purposes and may not reflect real driving results. Model shown is a Fiat Professional Fullback 2.4 180 Double Cab LX Manual EU5 (503,985.0) incl. metallic paint at £400 excl. VAT. All features listed come as standard. *Business users only. Contract hire payment profile of £2,388 in advance followed by 23 monthly rentals of £199. Rental excludes maintenance and is subject to VAT at statutory rate. Based on 8,000 miles per annum. Excess mileage charges apply. Promotion subject to status. Vehicles must be registered between 1st August and 30th September 2016. A guarantee or indemnity may be required. FCA Fleet Services UK, PO Box 4590, Slough, Berkshire, SL1 0WU. We work with a number of creditors including Fiat Professional Contract Hire.

RAC set to offer van checks for used buyers

The RAC has extended its RAC vehicle check service to cover light commercial vehicles. Priced at £14.99, the check provides information to prospective buyers on the complete vehicle history.

The service allows buyers to find out in seconds whether the LCV they are looking to buy is stolen, written-off or still on finance.

Beyond this, the RAC vehicle check provides a personalised valuation, to confirm whether the asking price is fair or not, as well as a checklist of things to look for when viewing the vehicle which could help in negotiating on price.

Commenting on the extension of the service, RAC director of motoring services, Rob Diamond, said: "Our comprehensive vehicle data check product has already given thousands of motorists greater confidence when buying a used car, so we are pleased to now be able to extend the service and offer it to businesses in the market for their next LCV.

Booming market

"The LCV market is booming at the moment and there are bargains to be had in the private used market in particular, but understandably small businesses looking for their next vehicle will want some reassurance that their purchase is a good one – not least because small businesses clock up so many more miles per year on average than private motorists.

"A vehicle check can really help here – for instance, it is the case that many LCVs are originally bought on finance and an SME will not want to be stung with being responsible for another firm's outstanding debts."



When choosing new vans, using the TCO formula is imperative – but few van fleets seem to understand this

Van users fail to understand total cost of ownership

Only one in 10 companies (11%) take total cost of ownership (TCO) into account when procuring vehicles, according to latest research.

Purchase price or lease cost ranked as the biggest consideration, selected by 64% of companies, with vehicle reliability a priority for just a third (33%), the study by fleet management specialist Fleet Operations revealed.

"Given the number of businesses that we talk to about the importance of using TCO, these findings were very surprising and suggest many companies may be incurring unnecessary fleet costs," said Ross Jackson, CEO of Fleet Operations.

"Although headline prices must be taken into account, TCO offers the most complete and meaningful evaluation for selecting fleet vehicles.

"This calculation includes not only leasing and purchasing costs but all real-life costs over the period vehicles are retained – from depreciation, fuel, insurance and maintenance to interest, tax and employers' NI."

Almost half of the companies surveyed (46%) said they were unaware of the correct formula for calculating TCO.

The study also found that more than a quarter (26%) of companies have seen lease costs rise in the past 12 months.

In spite of this finding, more than a third (38%) of those that lease vehicles do so using a solitary supplier.

Influence

"Lease costs can have a considerable influence on TCO but rising prices can be mitigated through competitive, multi-supplier, procurement practices," Jackson added. "Eye-catching deals on specific makes and models can lure companies, but a preferred sole supplier is unlikely to offer the best deals for all vehicles.

"Significant savings can be realised by searching the market for the best price on every vehicle.

"Although this can prove labour-intensive, it can be cost-effectively outsourced to a fleet management specialist."

Survey slams young van drivers for dangerous mobile phone use

A new survey by Brake, the road safety charity, and Direct Line reveals 25-34 year olds are taking huge risks by using their phones while driving.

More than half (55%) of 25-34 year old drivers questioned admitted they had sent or read a text message on their mobiles while behind the wheel of their van in the last year.

Despite it being illegal to use a hand-held mobile phone at all while driving, more than four in 10 (42%) revealed they send or read messages at least once a week.

One in five young drivers (18-24) confirmed they regularly text and/or instant message when they are behind the wheel.

Just under half of drivers (49%) aged 25-34 admitted they sometimes go online or use apps (other than sat-nav apps) while driving. Almost a third of drivers in that age group said they do that several times a week at least.

Reading and writing messages – whether texting, emailing or using apps or social networks – while driving is even more distracting than talking on a phone, as it takes your mind, hands and eyes off the road. Research by Brake showed texting drivers' reaction times are 35% slower and they also have poor lane control.

Furthermore, one large-scale study found texting drivers were 23



Van drivers are still breaking the law by using hand-held mobile phones on the move

times more likely to crash than a driver paying full attention.

A study of in-vehicle video footage estimated that 22% of crashes could be caused, at least in part, by driver distraction. It also showed that drivers who perform a secondary task at the wheel are two to three times more likely to crash.

Teacher killed

Zoe Carvin, a 42-year old teacher and mum of two, was killed when a 26-year-old lorry driver ploughed into a queue of traffic because he was reading a text message.

Her husband Paul said: "When Zoe died it was because someone

did something stupid. It was such a pointless death. Her death affected hundreds of lives. Two children have been brought up without a mother, 30 children lost their teacher, a driver has been jailed for three years; his life will never be the same either.

"Crashes like this devastate families. They are entirely preventable."

Alice Bailey, campaigns and communications adviser for Brake, said: "Younger drivers, especially those aged between 25 and 34, simply aren't getting the message about the dangers of using a mobile phone while driving."

Renault's first 4x4 breaks cover

Renault has finally revealed details of its first-ever 4x4 truck offering. The new model will be called the Alaskan and will basically be a rebadged Nissan Navara.

The Alaskan will carry the same powerplants as the Navara, offering power outputs of 160bhp and 190bhp. Towing capacity is 3.5 tonnes while fuel economy figures promise to be among the best in the sector. The new truck will be going on sale first in South America and as yet there are no details about when it will be launched in the UK.





Fiat Ducato E6 avoids AdBlue

All vans must have Euro 6 engines fitted after September this year – and most of the bigger vehicles will have an AdBlue tank added so they comply with the stricter emissions standards.

But Fiat has announced that with its Euro 6 Ducato, instead of using AdBlue, the standard has been achieved by using an exhaust gas recirculation system that not only reduces the complexity of the engine but also saves on the cost of AdBlue too.

The Low Pressure Exhaust Gas Recirculation system (LPEGR) functions by channelling exhaust gases away after the diesel particulate filter, cooling them through a low-pressure EGR cooler and then recirculating them in advance of the turbocharger.

Do YOU know your towing weight limit?

Van drivers are being urged to ensure they know their vehicle's towing capacity before hitching up to avoid breaking the law.

The call comes after research undertaken by Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles found that 53% of van drivers didn't know their vehicle's maximum load carrying capacity, and nearly half of businesses do not monitor the weights of company vehicles on a regular basis. In 2015, the DVSA stopped over 10,800 vans on UK roads and found 89% to be driving overloaded.

On a UK full car licence, anyone can drive up to 3.5 tonnes Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW). However when adding a trailer, the laws become more complicated, with restrictions on a permissible vehicle and trailer weights for those who obtained their driving licence after 1997.

Going above these weights without the right licence or a tachograph being fitted can lead to large fines for businesses.

Companies can also potentially face a court summons and even immobilisation of the vehicles for failing to comply.

Using the wrong vehicle for towing can also affect driving performance, for example reducing acceleration and increasing stopping distances, particularly in the wet, and can cause long term detrimental damage to the vehicle.

Trevor Hodgson-Phillips, head of service and parts at Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles, said: "Towing can cause a serious legal minefield for businesses and damage to vehicles. We aim to help our customers by advising on the right vehicle and towbar fitment to suit their needs."



Mercedes-Benz adds auto option to petrol van models



Mercedes-Benz Citan – now an auto box on petrol models

Mercedes-Benz has introduced dual-clutch automatic transmission versions of the Citan.

Citan panel van and Tourer models with the 112 petrol engine can benefit from the double clutch transmission, which combines a six-speed automatic transmission with the driving dynamics of a manual gearbox.

The six-speed dual-clutch transmission consists of two sub-transmissions, each with its own clutch. As one transmits drive to the wheels, the other has pre-selected the next gear. This allows for near seamless gear changes without loss of power.

Prices are £15,820 ex-VAT for the 112 panel van long 6G-DCT and £17,900 for the Tourer long variant.

Pick-up drivers warned over speed limit differences

Bigger pick-ups that have recently started to arrive on the UK market could have to abide by light commercial vehicle speed limits, says Arval, the vehicle leasing and fleet management company.

Models such as the most popular double-cab derivatives of the latest Ford Ranger, Toyota Hilux and Volkswagen Amarok can exceed the legal 2,040kg unladen weight classification for dual-purpose vehicles, which means they are no longer covered by passenger car speed limits.

This suggests that they should, in fact, not travel faster than 50mph on single carriageways and 60mph on dual carriageways – although the standard urban 30mph and 70mph motorway

limits continue to apply. This is of potential concern because these vehicles are often bought as a fleet alternative to a regular car.

Eddie Parker, commercial vehicle consultant at Arval UK, commented: "Pick-ups sold in the UK have been getting bigger and heavier for several years, driven by demand for increased payload from both fleet and domestic buyers.

"The result of this is that, at least technically, they have become light commercial vehicles in the eyes of the law and should be sticking to the lower speed limits.

"Confusingly, there is also a possibility that individual examples of the same model might fall either side of the 2,040kg limit because

of the fitting of optional equipment such as pick-up tops that are needed for some fleet applications.

"It is definitely a grey area and one of which fleet managers operating pick-ups should be aware."

Eddie added that Arval had contacted the DfT about the issue, who had conceded that the classification of some pick-ups may need to change in the future but that this could require a legal challenge to take place.

He said: "Our advice is that, where there is any doubt, it is best to advise your pick-up drivers to adopt the lower limits. There is little to be gained from potentially having to fight a test case if one of your vehicles is prosecuted."

Alert over bald van tyres

Do you leave your tyres to go bald before relacing them? If so it appears you are not alone! Over 10 million UK motorists could drive a vehicle with an illegal and dangerous tyre during 2016, according to results of a survey conducted by TyreSafe in partnership with Highways England.

The survey revealed more than 27% of tyres were already illegal when they were replaced. TyreSafe claims that could equate to more than one-in-four of the 37 million cars and LCVs on the UK's roads being driven with a tyre that could cost its driver a £2,500 fine and three penalty points, an MoT failure, or cause an accident.



As the vehicle's tyres are the only safety critical component in contact with the road, if it is unroadworthy the effectiveness of the vehicle's braking and steering systems are significantly compromised.

In particular, tread depth has a decisive impact on the amount of distance a vehicle takes to stop in the wet, and must be of at least the

minimum legal limit (1.6mm). Previous studies have proven that the braking distance of a vehicle with tread of 1.6mm is nearly 12m further than a vehicle with new tyres when braking in the wet from 50mph.

Commenting on the findings, Stuart Jackson, chairman, TyreSafe, said: "The tread depth survey results are a concern. Figures from the DfT show

that dangerous tyres are the largest single contributory factor in accidents resulting in casualties of any vehicle defect – including brakes. If the number of casualties from tyre-related incidents is to be reduced on our roads, the UK's motorists need to change their attitude to this primary safety feature and carry out regular checks."

London mayor vows to clean up city's polluted air

...and guess who's going to be footing the bill!
John Threadgold reports

London Mayor Sadiq Khan has set out his 'Clean Air Action Plan', in which the introduction of the Ultra Low Emission Zone is brought forward to 2019 from 2020.

The key points in the plan include:

- Implementing a £10 Emissions Surcharge (dubbed the 'T-charge') on the most polluting vehicles entering central London from 2017. The charge would apply to all vehicles with pre-Euro 4 emission standards (broadly speaking those registered before 2005) and will cost an extra £10 per day on top of the existing Congestion Charge.
- Introducing the central London Ultra-Low Emission Zone one year earlier in 2019
- Extending the Ultra-Low Emission Zone ('ULEZ') beyond central London from 2020: for motorcycles, cars and vans, to the North and South Circular; and for lorries, buses and coaches London-wide
- Developing a detailed proposal for a national diesel scrappage scheme for Government to implement
- Bringing forward the requirement for all double-deck buses to be ULEZ-compliant in central London from 2020 to 2019.

Detailed consultation will take place later this year and some



There are plans to extend the Ultra-Low Emission Zone beyond central London from 2020: for motorcycles, cars and vans to the North and South Circular and for lorries, buses and coaches London-wide

measures could be implemented as early as 2017.

Khan, said: "With nearly 10,000 people dying early every year in London due to exposure to air pollution, cleaning up London's toxic air is now an issue of life and death."

"It is the 60th anniversary of the Clean Air Act of 1956, which was passed following the great London smogs of the 1950s.

"The legislation made a huge difference to life in London and saved countless lives. British politicians at the time did an amazing thing and responded on the scale that was required. Today we face another pollution public health emergency in London and now it's our turn to act for the good of Londoners and for future generations to come.

"Just as in the 1950s, air pollution in London today is literally killing Londoners. But unlike the smoky pollution of the past, today's pollution is a hidden killer.

"That's why I'm launching a hard-hitting plan of action to clean up our filthy air. Tough challenges call for tough measures, so I'm proposing a new £10 charge for the most polluting vehicles in central London from 2017, followed by an even stronger crackdown on vehicles pumping out hazardous pollutants.

"I am also calling on the Government to work with me and to take more action to tackle air pollution.

"We can't do this alone in London. The Government should seize the spirit of the 60th anniversary of the Clean Air Act and pass new legislation fit for the 21st century. This needs to provide new powers and legal protections to ensure that the existing legal limits for air pollutants are retained following Brexit."

With nearly 10,000 people dying early every year in London due to exposure to air pollution, cleaning up London's toxic air is now an issue of life and death

Don't underestimate the dangers of *disrupted sleep*

New research shows that driving while tired is as dangerous as drunk driving. John Threadgold reports

Driving after suffering from disrupted sleep can be as dangerous as driving after no sleep. That's the finding of a new experiment commissioned by Time4Sleep.co.uk, which shows driving without sleep is "akin to being drunk behind the wheel".

Conducted in conjunction with the Transport Research Laboratory (TRL), the research, the experiment was carried out with the 27-year old triplets Robert, Stephen and Patrick Davis, who were given a full night's sleep, disrupted sleep and no sleep, respectively. The disrupted sleep pattern was designed to imitate that of a parent with a newborn baby

The triplets then participated in a TRL simulation that replicates a 90-minute motorway drive in a real car. Each driver was instructed to stay inside lane 1 of the three-lane motorway and drive at a constant speed of 60mph.

Self-assessment

In addition, the triplets were asked to periodically rate their own level of sleepiness and flash their headlights when a red bar appeared on the simulator to test reaction times. A heart rate monitor gave alerts when the triplets' heart rate dropped to a level classified as fatigued and the simulator recorded speed, acceleration and ability to stay in lane.

Robert, who had a full night's sleep, had no fatigue alerts from the heart rate monitor and had the fewest lane departures (30 departures and a total

of 39 seconds out of his lane).

Steven, who had disrupted sleep, had four fatigue alerts and left his lane a total of 58 times for a duration of 1 minute and 40 seconds.

Patrick, who had no sleep, not only received 12 fatigue alerts, but his ability to stay in the same lane was severely reduced, with 188 separate lane departures, equivalent to 6 minutes and 26 seconds travelling out of his lane.

However, it was Steven, who had disrupted sleep, who had the slowest reaction times. He failed to react 10 times, which was twice as often as Patrick and substantially more than Robert, who had no missed reactions.

A Time4Sleep survey of 1,000 British drivers also found that 83% of admitted to having driven while tired, with one in ten admitting to regularly getting behind the wheel while tired.

At risk

Almost one in three of those polled (33%) said they feel they have put people at risk in the past through driving while tired, with 19% admitting they felt they were in danger of causing an accident. Men were



New research has revealed the true danger of driving while tired or after disrupted sleep

significantly more likely to admit driving while tired at 40%, compared to 28% of women.

Jonathan Warren, director at Time4Sleep.co.uk, said: "We hope our research and video will make tired drivers consider if driving is really necessary, and use public transport if they don't feel fit to drive."

Important

Simon Tong, the principal psychologist at TRL who oversaw the experiment, added: "The findings of our experiment reveal just how important it is to only undertake driving when feeling alert and having had sufficient sleep. The key finding here was the triplet with disrupted sleep was affected as this is most common to real life.

"One dangerous aspect of fatigue is how it can come and go quite suddenly. You can get a false impression that you've overcome it, only to find that it strikes again a short time later when you perhaps aren't expecting it."

One dangerous aspect of fatigue is how it can come and go quite suddenly. You can get a false impression that you've overcome it only to find that it strikes again

VIVARO DOES THE DOUBLE



For the second year in a row, the Vauxhall Vivaro has picked up the What Van? Medium Van of the Year award. Hardly surprising when you consider the cutting-edge design, advanced BiTurbo engines (that provide more power, torque and economy) and class-leading load length of FlexCargo that all work to make the Vivaro so special.

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Official Government Test Environmental Data. Fuel consumption figures mpg (litres/100km) urban: 42.8 (6.6) - 51.4 (5.5), Combined: 40.9 (6.9) - 47.0 (6.0). CO₂ emissions: 178 - 155g/

#Fuel consumption information is official government environmental data, tested in accordance with the relevant EU directive. Official EU-regulated test data are provided for comparison purposes and actual

and CO₂ emissions (g/km). Vivaro Panel Van range: Urban: 35.3 (8.0) - 40.9 (6.9), Extra-km.#

performance will depend on driving style, road conditions and other non-technical factors. Model shown includes FlexCargo, not available on all models. Correct at time of going to press.

Fiat reveals its talented medium van

The Italian manufacturer has ended its tie-up with PSA and instead thrown its lot in with Renault for the new Talento medium van, a reworked Renault Trafic/Vauxhall Vivaro

Equally at home in the city as it is criss-crossing the country on the open road, the all-new Fiat Professional Talento will be the perfect van for many businesses who demand the best of all worlds – compact exterior dimensions with impressive interior volume of up to 8.6cu m and a payload of up to 1,249kg; ample load-pulling performance combined with outstanding fuel efficiency (47.9mpg / 5.9L/100km on the official combined cycle) and packed with features designed to improve the comfort, safety and productivity of the most precious cargo of all – the occupants.

From a design standpoint, the new Talento is compact and well-proportioned: the forward-stretching windscreen connects elegantly to the short bonnet and the overall effect is one of an imposing and dynamic front end.

The squared-off rear end allows for ample inner space and a high load capacity while giving the Talento a broad stance that exudes stability and strength. As a whole, the design is upright with bold, clear-cut lines in tune with the new family feeling of the Fiat Professional range.

There are nine body styles to choose from – the standard- and high-roof vans in short- and long-wheelbase versions, short- and

long-wheelbase people carriers and crew vans and a long-wheel base platform cab.

Innovative features include the “CargoPlus” storage area under the passenger seats which allows professionals to carry objects up to 3.75m in length (4.15 for LWB versions) by sliding them into a special bulkhead opening. Rear doors can open up to a wide angle of 255° allowing easy access and usage of the loading bay while the sliding side door has an aperture of 1,030 mm and a load edge just 100mm above the ground.

The load volume equals 5.2cu m in short wheelbase models, 6cu m in long wheelbase versions and a generous 8.6cu m in the long wheelbase high-roof derivative.

This means that the Talento, even in the short wheelbase trim level, is capable of carrying three Euro pallets and, depending on the version, a payload of up to 1,249 kg with a GVW of up to 3,060kg.

The Talento is equipped with 1.6-litre turbo and twin-turbo diesel engines, all equipped with a six-speed manual gearbox as standard, employing Selective Catalytic Reduction (SCR) technology, a system which reduces nitrogen oxide emissions by injecting a solution of non-toxic, non-flammable AdBlue into the exhaust gas.

The entry-level engine is the

95bhp 1.6-litre turbodiesel which is ideally suited to city driving thanks to its high torque output of 260Nm and its excellent official combined cycle fuel efficiency figure of 43.5mpg and low CO2 emissions of just 170g/km.

In EcoJet specification with Start&Stop, this engine can return an outstanding 46.3mpg on the official combined cycle and CO2 emissions are reduced to 160g/km.

The 1.6-litre MultiJet 120bhp offers a mix of performance, value-for-money and efficiency, thanks to its 300Nm of torque, official combined cycle fuel efficiency figure of 43.5 mpg and emissions of 170g/km.

The 1.6-litre Twin Turbo EcoJet diesel engines employ sophisticated turbo-charging technology to boost both performance and efficiency, resulting in outputs of 125bhp and 320Nm of torque and 145bhp and 340Nm for the top engine version.

The first turbo provides high torque at low speed to ensure excellent engine responsiveness at low-to-medium revs, whereas the

second turbo is activated at higher engine speeds to maintain linear performance across the rev range.

As a result, there is no efficiency compromises despite the high power and torque outputs – indeed, the 125hp version is actually the most efficient in the range returning 47.9 mpg on the official fuel efficiency combined cycle with emissions of just 155g/km, while the high-performance 145bhp engine matches the economy and emissions outputs of the EcoJet 95hp engine: 46.3mpg and 160g/km.

Inside, the Talento has been designed to be easy to use for long periods of time, with ergonomically shaped and comfortable seats, a perfectly positioned steering wheel and controls which make every day driving more relaxing and safe.

Examples of this attention to detail include the 90 litres of in-cabin storage space in a variety of shapes and sizes (including compartments hidden under the seat base

and behind the seat back of the passenger seats), an additional blind spot-mitigating ViewPlus interior mirror, the innovative fold-down central seat with detachable clipboard holder and the available smartphone/tablet holder.

In terms of safety, all versions are fitted with LED daytime running lights, ABS with EBD (electronic brake distribution) and EBA (emergency brake assistance) in addition to a sophisticated ESC system with Hill Holder and Traction+ as standard.

Available safety features include side airbags and window-bags a Trailer Stability Assist (TSA) system which guarantees total stability when towing by automatically modulating engine power and braking force applied to each wheel to stabilise both the vehicle and a wayward trailer.

A front parking assist system and a reversing camera (with a display in the rear-view mirror) are also available.

Standard equipment on the entry level includes remote central locking, electric front windows (one-touch lowering on the driver's side), electrically operated and heated door mirrors, a full bulkhead, a height adjustable driver's seat with lumbar support and an arm rest, dual passenger seat, a powerful audio system with Bluetooth, DAB, USB, Aux-in, a full-size spare wheel and steering-wheel remote controls.

The Talento is now on sale with prices, ex-VAT and OTR charges, starting at £19,795 for the 1.6-litre MultiJet 95hp SWB standard roof van. The 1.6-litre MultiJet 120hp SWB is priced at £20,195 while the twin-turbo 1.6-litre EcoJet 125hp S&S is priced at £20,645. The range topping twin-turbo 1.6-litre EcoJet 145hp S&S is priced from £21,245.

The long-wheelbase Talento is priced from £21,395 (1.6 MultiJet 120hp), the crew van starts at £21,145 (1.6 MultiJet 95hp) and the platform cab is available from £21,545 (1.6 EcoJet 125hp S&S).



VW T6: can vans get any better than this?

Our first drive behind the wheel of the new UK Transporter shows the legend lives on – and gets better and better. John Threadgold reports

OK let's start by sweeping aside all the hoo-hah that is going on at present surrounding Volkswagen's emissions testing. The Transporter didn't feature among the list of the vehicles affected, so for the sake of this road test we can completely ignore the problem.

We already drove the new T6, which went on sale last September, at the launch in Sweden (left-hand drive vehicles only) so now we have finally got to test our first UK model.

While the latest incarnation doesn't look a whole lot different

on the outside, there are changes galore underneath. Our test model is the top-range Highline variety, boasting a Euro 6 compliant diesel powerplant with 102bhp on tap. This engine is expected to be the biggest seller.

Weighing in at a basic price of £22,735, this model has a dazzling array of standard equipment that would fill this page on its own if we listed it all. It includes safety items such as automatic post-collision braking, a sleepy driver alert system, hill-hold assist, traction control, alloy wheels, heated



windscreen, cruise control and air-conditioning. Our test van also had a built-in navigation system at a hefty £816.

This model gets a Blue Motion badge, signifying its green credentials. What this means in real life is that it is slated to return a very creditable 47.9mpg on the combined cycle thanks to such extras as low rolling resistance tyres, regenerative braking and a stop-start system.

Euro 5 engines were available until they became obsolete after September 2016 and all the powerplants in the range offer better fuel economy than the old ones – up

to 15% better in fact.

The rear end of the Transporter hasn't changed since T5 days, which we won't mark Volkswagen down on as there was nothing wrong with the existing arrangements.

Our test model swallowed 5.8 cubic metres of cargo – just beating that of the rival Vauxhall Vivaro – but thanks to the extra weight of the vehicle, it loses out badly to the Griffin on payload – 858kg against the Vivaro's 1,239kg.

This means that care will have to be taken to make sure the Transporter isn't overloaded.

On the road, the Transporter is a delight, feeling incredibly well screwed together to withstand the rigours of a busy fleet life. The driver's seat is all-new, giving even more support on long journeys than the old one which we always reckoned was a winner.

The dash is new too and we were pleased to note that there is now a 12-volt take-off on top of the dash so that plug-in sat-navs don't leave their wires trailing all over the place.

On the ride and handling front we reckon the Transporter is challenged only by the Transit Custom, both offering slick gearchanges and

taut handling. We were, however, surprised to see that the Transporter only had five gears.

A sixth cog would have been much appreciated.

Spec sheet

Gross vehicle weight (kg):	2,800
Power (bhp/rpm):	102/3,750
Torque (lb-ft/rpm):	184/1,500-2,750
Load volume (cu m):	5.8
Payload (kg):	858
Comb fuel economy (mpg):	47.9
CO2 emission (g/km):	153
Basic price (ex-VAT):	£22,735

Leasing: avoid that sting in the tail

End-of-contract damage recharging is one of the biggest bones of contention among fleets which lease their vans. Here we talk to some of the experts about how such costs can be avoided

If you lease your vans, you could well be in for a nasty shock when you return them at the end of their contracts.

If they aren't in the condition which the leasing company expects them to be in, they will charge you to have them repaired. And those charges could amount to thousands of pounds.

Some van operators believe leasing companies use recharges to provide an extra little bit of profit on the side – an accusation firmly denied by those concerned, hardly surprisingly. So we asked some leading leasing bosses what operators can do to make sure there is no end-of-life sting in the tail of their contracts.

It's good to talk

Andy Hartley, commercial director at Lex Autolease, said: "A discussion of end-of-contract damage recharges should form a central part of any negotiations. Both the business and the leasing company should be fully aware of the other's expectations and all end-of-contract

processes should be clearly defined before any agreement is signed.

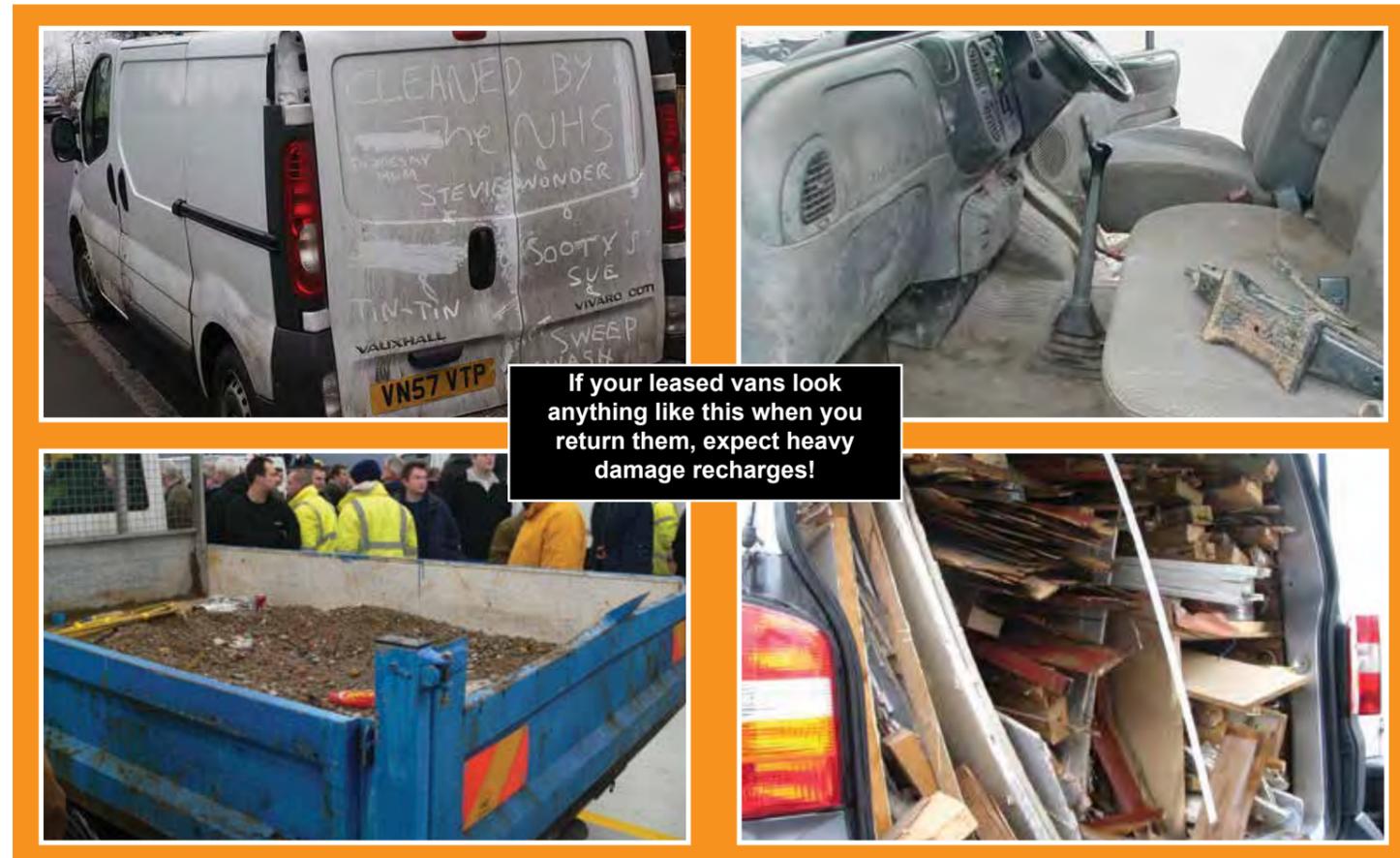
"Fleet policies can be designed strategically so that company car drivers are liable for all or part of any end-of-contract charges incurred.

"Putting the onus on employees goes a long way to encourage them to take better care of their vehicle during its lease."

What can fleets do during a vehicle's time with that company to minimise end-of-contract damage recharges?

Andy said: "Most simply, businesses can complete all repairs themselves, or through their accident management provider, prior to returning the vehicle to the fleet company. This places the customer in full control, though any potential impact on insurance costs must be balanced against savings made by avoiding end-of-contract costs.

Julia Thirtle-Watts, general manager, remarketing operations at LeasePlan UK, said: "We advise fleet managers and drivers to appraise vehicle condition in



the months before returning a vehicle. This check-up gives fleet managers the opportunity to control and manage any possible end-of-contract damage charges, in line with their agreed contract.

Steve Shaw, head of remarketing and logistics at Alphabet, said: "First and foremost, fleets need to uphold the manufacturer's servicing intervals. If those aren't maintained, then the recharge is potentially hundreds of pounds straightaway.

"Drivers should also be cautious, particularly when parking. A lot of damage recharges are from scuffs and dents when parking, or when a vehicle is left.

"At Lex Autolease, we launched iPad technology at the end of 2014 to simplify the de-hire process for our customers. We also introduced a simplified pricing matrix which details all charges by vehicle size and damage type, which helps customers to make informed decisions about whether to undertake repairs ahead of returning a vehicle. As with all aspects of fleet management, clarity of communication between drivers, employers and fleet companies is crucial.

Steve Shaw said: "We find that the biggest area of confusion among fleets is understanding the extent of damage: one person's 'polish out' is another person's 'repaint the side'. With some of the colours and paint finishes available now, it is no longer

the case that you can just touch up a scratch and it'll be fine, so we either have to repair it or we have to lose money on the vehicle when it comes to reselling it. If you're unsure about any damage, speak to your leasing company.

So how do you decide what damage is repaired before a vehicle is sold?

Andy said: "Lex Autolease does not repair vehicles that are being returned to the used market. Most ex-fleet vehicles are returned to auction rather than directly to retail, and the majority of people who bid on ex-fleet vehicles are independent traders who will choose the level of refurbishment for vehicles and complete repairs themselves cost-effectively.

"Taking this route quickly turns a vehicle into cash for a leasing company, and the lower value commanded by a non-repaired ex-fleet vehicle sold at auction is more than offset by the speedy sale and absence of repair costs that a leasing company might normally incur.

"However, the vehicle will still deliver lower sales proceeds when returned in a damaged condition than if it had been returned in a condition in accordance with the BVRLA's fair wear and tear guidelines, with the damage recharges levied being used to compensate for this loss in value."

Steve said: "Fleets don't always see how much damage costs to repair.

"Our auction guys are well trained and they know what they've got to look for: it tends to be the extent and location of the damage which determines whether a repair is carried out. I completely understand customers' frustrations that we might not always be working in their favour, but we always are."

Top tips to reduce end-of-contract damage recharges

● **AH:** A missing spare set of keys can incur penalties of up to £500 once the vehicle's security system has to be reset, yet it is one of the most common causes of end-of-contract charges we encounter. Providing drivers with a standard checklist of items that come with the vehicle but may be removed and stored or mislaid prior to their return, such as keys, spare wheels, parcel shelves and log books is a

simple yet effective way for fleets to reduce unnecessary charges.
● **JTW:** Something as simple as returning both the master key and spare key can save significant sums in end-of-contract-charges. Some replacement keys can cost upwards of £200 due to ever more sophisticated security systems. When returning electric vehicles, return the charging cable as this can cost up to £1,000 to replace.

● **SS:** Be honest at the start of the contract as to the usage of the vehicle. Always go round the van a couple of days before the vehicle is collected and, if there is any issue, contact the leasing company, as we are best placed to give you an opinion on it. Make sure everything is returned that came with the car, such as spare keys, any sat-nav discs or SD cards, service records and locking wheel nuts.

Lease contracts: How long should you keep your vans?

If you lease your vans, you'll have to decide at the start of the contract how long you want to keep them for. But what length of time, and how miles, do you go for? Here, we meet Mark Lovett, head of commercial vehicles at contract hire giant LeasePlan, who has some sound advice on the subject of van fleet lifecycles

TVD: What is the most popular contract (years/mileage)? Why is that term the most popular – because it is the most cost-effective?

ML: At LeasePlan UK, our average lease contract term for van clients is 44 months / 25k mileage p/ annum.

However, within that average term, there is a lot of variance within the client base: Local Authority and the public sector operators tend to opt for longer contracts at about 60 months as the mileage tends to be lower (local authorities operating in local environments).

The SME clients typically sign up to a 36 or 48-month contract with average annual mileage around 20,000.

Our major corporate client base has a typical contract lease term for vans based on 48 months / 20–30k p/annum. Essentially, the contract is based on the client's operation of their van and the anticipated mileage.

TVD: What is the longest/highest mileage contract you offer?

ML: Our longest contract offering is 60 months and 150,000 miles in total.

Naturally, there is some flexibility in this once the contracts are set live with the client and they may find that due to changes in their business operation, or changes in their van use, they will need to formally (or informally) extend beyond the original parameters.

They may also choose to early terminate a contract if the van is no longer required

TVD: In your experience what is the general effect of keeping vehicles longer? Is it worthwhile in terms of breakdowns and general maintenance?

ML: The logical effect of keeping vans on the road for longer periods of time is increased wear & tear on the vehicle and of course, higher mileage.

Neither of those is a problem as the contract is set on those criteria at the outset.

Only if vans go into extended hire periods can there be unexpected SMR costs and negative impacts on the residual value.

However, from an operational perspective, if the van is maintained in line with manufacturer's schedules, there is no disadvantage to the operator in terms of vehicle efficiency in running a modern van for over five years.

Many of our local authority clients have vans that are up to 10 years old – and they are still doing a good job.



Mark Lovett – offering sound advice to trade users on how long to keep their vans

TVD: What happens to the resale values of vans when they are kept on fleet longer? Do they plummet after so many years or will they still keep their values as long as they are in good condition?

ML: Essentially, residual values are always based on age and mileage.

Therefore, it's not necessarily the case that RVs plummet when a van reaches a certain age. Moreover, there is a gradual reduction in the resale value as the van ages.

In today's used van disposals market, where there still exists a

shortage of good used van stock, our experience is that provided the van is maintained well and in good condition, even old vans with high mileage still achieve strong resale values.

TVD: What would your advice to fleet managers be if they are considering keeping their vans for longer?

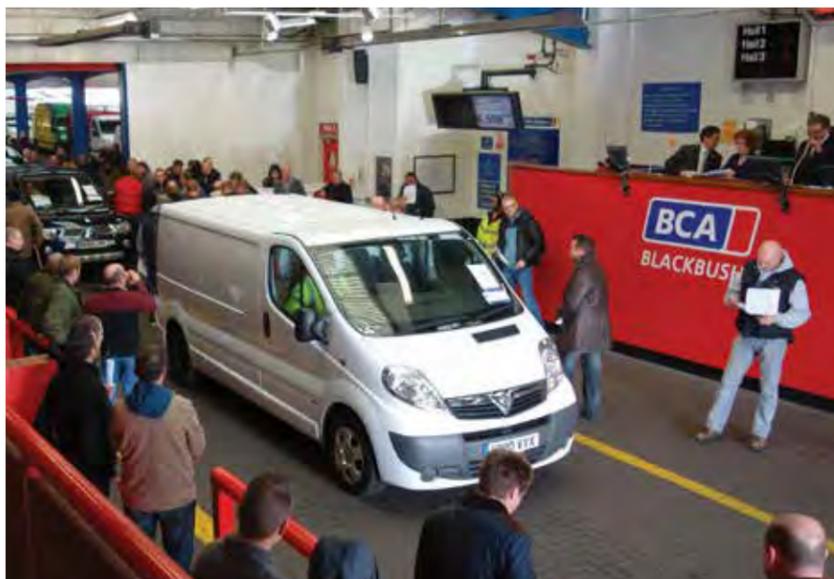
ML: Our advice to one of our van customers who expressed an interest in keeping their van for longer than originally intended, would be to discuss with us the

reasons and rationale for doing so. Essentially, we would ask our van operator three key questions:

1) Is your van fleet costing you more than it should by running vans for a longer period?

2) Has your business requirement changed and therefore is the older van still fit for purpose?

3) Is keeping an older van with increasing mileage going to increase efficiency of your business and decrease operational risk or vice versa?



Provided the van is maintained well and in good condition, even old vans with high mileage still achieve strong resale values

**For details of the services offered by LeasePlan, log on to:
www.leaseplan.co.uk**

Loads to carry? Should you buy roof bars or a full-length roof rack?

Van-Racks has the answer to all your loading problems

If you are carrying ladders or pipes, you'll almost certainly need roof bars or a full-length roof rack. Which system should you buy, and which accessories?

The answer depends on what you want to carry, the height of your van, your approach to risk, and of course your budget.

Three-bar roof bar systems usually provide a better loading platform than two-bar systems, especially for ladders and e.g. 8ft x 4ft sheets.

If you are only carrying ladders and copper pipes then roof bars, together with a locking pipe tube, may be adequate.

Easy and secure

The Rhino Products SafeClamp makes easy and secure work of fixing ladders – they are sold in pairs and are great value.

Fitting a rear step to a mid-size van makes a surprisingly big difference to roof and pipe-tube access.

It also makes sense to fit a roller to prevent ladder damage to the top of the van. A Rhino LadderStow



ladder slide will force the ladder into its correct place.

You are going to need a ladder to get up to the roof to fit the ladder clamps – either a rear door mounted ladder, or a side access ladder which you'll store inside the vehicle.

Safety and flexibility

Many people like the relative safety and flexibility of a full-length rack. Some businesses prohibit their people from climbing on their vans, so they use, for example, a Rhino Products SafeStow for safe and easy ladder handling.

Others need to carry wide loads on the roof, or have budgetary constraints, so have no realistic options except to spend as little time on the roof as possible. Load stops and good straps will save time



and reduce risk. The challenge of safe loading and access increases massively with large vans.

VAN-RACKS sells a wide range of roof rack systems and accessories, as well as van seat covers, straps, and winter driving products including AutoSock textile snow socks.



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Visit van-racks.co.uk for further details



Kombi offers best of both worlds

By **John Threadgold**

If you need a little van for your business and a car to take the wife and kids out at the weekends, there is no need for two vehicles any more.

The Ford Transit Courier Kombi on test here offers the best of both worlds – 1.9 cubic metres of loadspace or seating for five, the choice is yours.

Weighing in at £15,644 ex-VAT the Kombi is powered by a 1.5-litre turbodiesel engine offering 75bhp and a combined fuel economy figure of 68.9mpg. Having seating for five makes this van incredibly versatile, but unfortunately, the fact that it has

windows in the side means that VAT can't be claimed back unless it is used solely for business purposes.

The cab of the Courier will be instantly recognisable to anyone who has driven a Ford before, whether car or van. The dash is similar to that in just about all models that Ford makes so the switchgear is all familiar.

The Courier feels much bigger than it really is to, thanks to a windscreen that is pushed right forward. There's an overhead shelf for papers and suchlike and two coffee cup holders in the middle of the console but sadly, unlike with its bigger brothers, the Courier doesn't have a 12-volt take-off on top of the dash, so if you plug in a sat-nav, there are wires trailing all over the place.

But it's in the back of the van where all the interesting features can be found.

There is a surprising amount of legroom for rear seat passengers and when the seats aren't needed, they can be either folded down in a 60/40 arrangement, or removed altogether. While this arrangements

offers maximum practicality, removing the seats, especially the bigger of the two, isn't exactly an easy job.

The rear seats are accessed by twin side sliding doors and there are also asymmetric "barn doors" at the rear. With the seats up, the van offers 1.0 cubic metres of loadspace, rising to 1.9 cu m with the seats removed.

The rear also features a wipe clean plastic load floor and half height plastic protection at the sides.

Even in base variant, the van isn't badly specced, with remote locking, DAB radio with Bluetooth and USB, driver and passenger rake and reach adjustable seats, hill launch assist, trailer sway control, roll-over mitigation, front, side and curtain airbags and a tyre pressure monitoring system as standard.

As with Ford's other new Transits, we can't praise the Courier highly enough for its superb build quality, lively engine response and pin-sharp handling. Each one of the four Transit models on offer have propelled Ford right in to the premium van sector.

Spec sheet

Gross vehicle weight (kg):	1,795
Power (bhp/rpm):	75/3,750
Torque (lb-ft/rpm):	140/2,250
Load volume (max) (cu m):	1.9
Payload (kg):	565
Comb fuel economy (mpg):	68.9
CO2 emission (g/km):	108
Basic price (ex-VAT):	£15,644

Don't scrimp on those paid-for safety features

If you ignore added extras at buying time that could save your life, then you risk going the way of my mate Gary – or even something worse



I was instrumental in choosing a new van for my mate Gary the other week. He is a carpenter and was looking for a mid-sized vehicle, so I suggested the Ford Transit Custom as, in my book, it's about as good as mid-sized vehicles get.

Sure enough, a few weeks later he turned up at my house to show off his shiny new acquisition and to say he was as pleased as the proverbial double-appendaged canine would be an understatement.

He loves it.

Sadly, he pitched up again a few days later and showed me yet another new acquisition – a big dent in the back where he had inadvertently backed into a post.

Sorry tale

As Gary was left counting the cost of his bad driving, I got thinking to myself and in my mind, this sorry tale brings up two important points for my readers.

Point number one is that in my book, and in the book of many other people involved in the light commercial vehicle industry, reversing sensors should be a mandatory item on all vans.

You just can't see out of the back of a van so anyone who happens to be passing behind is likely to be squashed if you happen to reverse towards them at the same time.

Gary was lucky in a way. The post came off far better than the van.



Reversing sensors should be made a legal requirement on all light commercial vehicles in my opinion

But what if that post had been a woman pushing a baby in a buggy? It doesn't bear thinking about.

But in the absence of any plans to make reversing sensors a legal requirement, my second point is that far too many van buyers don't choose the right paid-for options when they look at what's on offer.

Taken for granted

A lot of owner-drivers select a nice set of alloys, or a beefed-up stereo system, but safety seems to be something that is taken for granted.

I was talking to a senior auctioneer

at BCA Auctions the other week and he confirmed that it's the same when vans are being sold.

Razzle-dazzle counts

Whereas second users will willingly bid extra money for 'razzle-dazzle' items, they won't stump up for reversing sensors, ESC systems and the like which could well save their lives.

So my message this month is simple – when you buy a new van, make sure you look carefully at the extra items on offer and choose ones that will keep you safe on the roads. A major prang could see your business go down the pan in a split second, so isn't it worth paying a little extra to avoid such a catastrophe?

Safe lanes, amigos!

“Far too many van buyers don't choose the right paid-for options when they look at what's on offer and ignore safety devices”

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