

Websites in our sights

The online offering from light commercial vehicle manufacturers is becoming increasingly important as operators become better informed before they even start discussions about their acquisition, be it for one vehicle or a thousand. Paul Barker takes a look at the websites for the top 10 UK LCV manufacturers to see which is best serving its digital audience.

Being on-the-ball online is a vital part of modern business. Everyone has less time and more work than ever, so the ability to swiftly research anything from vehicle dimensions to dealer location or how to ask for more information should be straightforward.

For the third time, *What Van?* has conducted independent research into the quality of the websites for the 10 biggest-selling LCV brands in the UK, using a set of 10 criteria to rank them in order of how they best serve their audience. There's a massive variance in quality and attention to detail, and our analysis contains a combination of some hard numbers-based answers and some based on the experience and opinion of the *What Van?* editorial team. Each site has its strengths and weaknesses, but we hope this research will help users identify where they can get the best information and highlight some characteristics they didn't even know were available, while it should also act as encouragement and evidence in order for some of the poorer sites to improve their game, which will be of benefit to the van operator users.

Methodology

What Van? has devised 10 areas that we see as crucial to a successful website, and assessed each of the top 10 manufacturers' websites on each, rating them in order for every category. So the best one earns 10 points, down to a single point for the one we deem least good in each section. That's given us a percentage total result figure that in this case resulted in a clear winner. But it allows you to see which manufacturers we have assessed to be the leader in each of the following criteria:

- **Ease of use:** A fundamental point, but how easy is the site to navigate around, are all the features straightforward to access and is everything in a logical place?
- **Design:** Mainly cosmetic, but with a little functionality factored in, how does each site look when you enter it, and how visually appealing is it?
- **Van configurator:** How useful and encompassing is the option to configure a light commercial vehicle, given how many choices there are in the LCV arena? It can be a complicated process speccing the right one, so how much help does the manufacturer give its potential customers?

- **Downloadable brochure:** How easy is it to download a brochure, how much information does the manufacturer need you to part with to get it and what's it like when you've got it?
- **Email response:** Using the 'Contact Us' email address on each site, we asked which of each brand's vehicles meet Euro6 emissions legislation. We're looking for a speedy and accurate response from the 'Contact us' option, and how easy it is to contact the manufacturer in the first place.
- **Telephone enquiry:** It's sometimes easier to pick up the phone you may think, but how will manufacturers respond to being asked about the warranties offered on their vehicles?
- **Find a dealer:** A useful tool from any manufacturer's website, but how do they compare?
- **Social media presence:** Being active on Twitter, Facebook and Youtube can be a handy communication device, but who is doing it best?
- **Mobile site:** An increasing number of van visitors are coming from mobile devices, hence *What Van?* having its own mobile site. But how well are the manufacturers doing?
- **Extras:** What else do manufacturers offer to make their site appealing and help visitors, beyond the basics?

Ranking	Manufacturer	Score	Movement	Good	Bad
1	Citroen	72%	▲1	Mobile site	No response to email
2	Fiat	64%	▲6	Only one with an app	Poorest dealer finder
3	Vauxhall	61%	▲2	Good email and phone responses	Info needed for brochure download
4	Mercedes	60%	▲3	Dealer finder and extras	No mobile site
5	Volkswagen	58%	▼4	Dedicated social media channels	Dealer finder isn't great
6	Renault	57%	▼2	Brochure download	No social media activity
7	Ford	52%	▼4	Everything is reasonable	Nothing is exceptional
8	Nissan	47%	▼2	Good email response	Site feels like a car add-on
9	Toyota	39%	▼1	Excellent response to email	Not enough effort on LCV site
10	Peugeot	38%	-	Decent configurator	Very poor phone and email interaction



Citroen
www.citroen.co.uk/new-vans

Ease of use
●●●●●●●●●●10
Everything seems easy to locate and well-spaced.

Design
●●●●●●●●●●8
Redesigned in the last year, the Citroen site has a nice bold lead image, it's just a shame it's clearly not a UK vehicle as it has the pre-facelift Relay model named as the Jumper in the shot, its name in mainland Europe.

Configuring tool
●●●●●●●●●●10
Able to search by size or weight of load as well as model, to help potential buyers choose the most appropriate vehicle. A unique offering.

Brochure download
●●●●●●●●●●8
Brochure and price list requests default to cars rather than vans, necessitating an extra click, but it's otherwise straightforward.

Email response
●●●●●●●●●●6
No form filling and easy to enter a question, though it took three days to get a response.

Phone help
●●●●●●●●●●8
Quick to answer the phone and quick to give the right answer.

Find a dealer tool
●●●●●●●●●●4
The dealer locator is off the bottom of the first page of the homepage, which means a scroll down to find it.

Social media
●●●●●●●●●●4
Car-orientated Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube accounts.

Mobile site
●●●●●●●●●●10
The best level of mobile-specific site detail of any brand in our opinion. It's not perfect, but still the leader.

Extras
●●●●●●●●●●4
Offers and approved used vehicles, but nothing to set pulses racing.

Verdict **72%**
2015's best LCV manufacturer website. Great strengths were enough to more-than compensate for weakness with social media and site extras.



Fiat Professional
www.fiatprofessional.co.uk

Ease of use
●●●●●●●●●●9
Proves stylish can also be functional.

Design
●●●●●●●●●●10
A good-looking site with everything logically placed.

Configuring tool
●●●●●●●●●●9
Easy to spot on the homepage, well-designed and easy to use.

Brochure download
●●●●●●●●●●3
You need to enter name and email to download the brochure or separate price list, though it is at least opt-in for more detail, rather than opt-out.

Email response
●●●●●●●●●●5
A response took four working days, though at least the form only asked for minimal information.

Phone help
●●●●●●●●●●4
It took a couple of attempts to find the right number, but an answer was forthcoming without hassle when we eventually spoke to the right person.

Find a dealer tool
●●●●●●●●●●1
It's not easy to spot the nearest dealer, the map isn't helpful and there isn't an obvious link to the dealer's own website.

Social media
●●●●●●●●●●9
One of only two van manufacturers with a dedicated Facebook page, and it also has a less-used YouTube channel.

Mobile site
●●●●●●●●●●4
No mobile site but the tabs are big enough to mean smartphone access isn't as bad as others.

Extras
●●●●●●●●●●10
The only brand to offer a free app, and it's full of useful stuff, from a handbook for the Ducato and Fiorino to test drive requests, dealer locator, service and MoT reminders.

Verdict **64%**
A site that both looks good and works well, and the app is excellent, though it's a shame the dealer-finder is below par and the email response was slow.



Ford
www.ford.co.uk/Commercialvehicles

Ease of use
●●●●●●●●●●6
Straightforward and logical layout.

Design
●●●●●●●●●●2
Basic design with lots of white space and no hint of the flair or dynamism of the current range.

Configuring tool
●●●●●●●●●●6
Stops conflicting items being specified but assumes too much user knowledge of axle ratios, and you can only print the results.

Brochure download
●●●●●●●●●●7
Good and comprehensive, apart from the site initially defaulting to cars.

Email response
●●●●●●●●●●4
You have to register to email Ford, and the reply simply said to call a £1 per minute line to get an answer. Not good enough, but at least the company responded.

Phone help
●●●●●●●●●●3
We were hung up on after a five minute wait to speak to someone, although we had success the second time.

Find a dealer tool
●●●●●●●●●●6
Ford is the only one to offer a specific person's email at the local dealer; a nice touch. Otherwise a decent filter of dealer specialities is good, but the site doesn't offer directions.

Social media
●●●●●●●●●●6
No specific van accounts, but the Ford UK Facebook and Twitter do have some van content. There's also Ford's own channel - Ford Social - and YouTube.

Mobile site
●●●●●●●●●●7
There is a mobile site, but it keep defaulting back to cars, and there's no pricing or spec info that we could see.

Extras
●●●●●●●●●●5
The site offers information on conversions and promotions, but not a great deal else.

Verdict **52%**
Ford slips a few places compared with last year, not helped by poor email and phone responses and a design that it's not unfair to call pretty uninspiring.



Mercedes-Benz
www.mercedes-benz.co.uk/vans

Ease of use
●●●●●●●●●●3
Doesn't throw the useful stuff, such as the van range, in your face as much as other sites.

Design
●●●●●●●●●●5
Black and white framing is quite nice, though the differing sizes of box means it looks like there is too much going on.

Configuring tool
●●●●●●●●●●4
No tool evident, just a page where you can look at different wheel and tyre combinations for the Vito.

Brochure download
●●●●●●●●●●6
Not easy enough to track down, as the brochure tab only refers to postal requests. Once you find the right area of the site it's straightforward though.

Email response
●●●●●●●●●●7
Replied within four hours, which was better than most.

Phone help
●●●●●●●●●●7
Quick response with the right answer. No complaints.

Find a dealer tool
●●●●●●●●●●9
Users have to go one click deeper than most sites, but there's a wealth of useful dealer-related information when you get to it, including e-mail service booking.

Social media
●●●●●●●●●●8
There is a Mercedes-Benz Vans Twitter feed, and the Vito Sport-related Facebook page has more than 35,000 likes, but it's not heavy on product content.

Mobile site
●●●●●●●●●●2
No mobile site and not the most straightforward to navigate on a smartphone.

Extras
●●●●●●●●●●9
Plenty of additional info such as fleet and business guides and used vans including rival brands on its dealers' forecourts. Nothing devastating but useful stuff.

Verdict **60%**
A hop up three places on last year's result, and a site that's pretty good in many areas without leading the market in any of them.



Nissan
www.nissan.co.uk/lcv

Ease of use
2 It's not immediately obvious where to head from the car site, and you have to click on a specific product to get to things like brochure downloads and information.

Design
3 It's plain – there's a decent lead image but little else going on and seems to be an offshoot from the car site.

Configuring tool
5 You have to go down a couple of levels of the site to get to it, and only the NV200 has a proper configurator. Send to Dealer function is a nice touch.

Brochure download
2 Brochure and price lists are found when you click on the model, rather than on the homepage, and Nissan asks for too much detail before letting you download.

Email response
8 Good turnaround time on the email.

Phone help
5 Annoying rap genre hold music cost Nissan a mark or two here as it otherwise answered our question quickly enough.

Find a dealer tool
7 The highlight is the customer sales and service ratings, though the finder itself isn't as user-friendly or easy to find as others.

Social media
7 Massive 10.8m following for what purports to be the Nissan UK Facebook page, although that, the Twitter and YouTube accounts, and the EV Facebook page are all car-focused.

Mobile site
6 LCVs fall under the car menu, so not immediately obvious, but a decent level of detail once you're in.

Extras
2 All very car-orientated.

Verdict 47%
Another site that doesn't illustrate the firm's commercial vehicle ambitions to the full. Bits of it are decent, but there's a sense of it not being a dedicated CV investment.



Peugeot
www.peugeot.co.uk/vans

Ease of use
4 Clicking through the range is easy, but the other facilities are rather small to read and click. The site isn't van-specific, being aligned with Peugeot's fleet business.

Design
4 Plenty of white space but otherwise straightforward.

Configuring tool
8 It took a second to spot the tool on the homepage, but it works well, has save, send to friend or print options and lists the detailed configuration of the vehicle.

Brochure download
9 Pricing and spec are, unlike most rivals, both on the same document in a simple format.

Email response
2 Nothing back after a week, and there doesn't seem to be a van customer services email, so we sent it to the fleet one in the end.

Phone help
1 The number of the van website is only available until 3.30pm, and we were given another number to call anyway when we tried again the following day.

Find a dealer tool
3 The tab is in a small font at the top of the page and it's a middling offering once you've spotted it.

Social media
3 No van-specific accounts, but Peugeot UK has Facebook, Twitter and YouTube accessible from the van website.

Mobile site
1 No mobile site and the website doesn't fit to the screen size of a smart phone.

Extras
3 Very little effort made to offer van-specific content apart from the product info.

Verdict 38%
Peugeot remains bottom of our survey thanks to a site that seems to be little more than an offshoot of the main car one, rather than a dedicated LCV resource.



Renault
www.renault.co.uk/vans

Ease of use
8 Straightforward and obvious to navigate.

Design
7 You have to scroll down more than most sites so less information is on the top screen, but it means more is available without clicking through menus.

Configuring tool
2 Couldn't find one.

Brochure download
10 Obvious button on the homepage to get to the brochures, and the downloads by model include prices. How they should all be done.

Email response
1 Didn't get one. And that was after struggling to get the online form to accept our question. The product query page just pushes the user to the nearest dealer.

Phone help
2 Poor. We were on hold for 15 minutes the first time we tried, with hold music loud enough to deafen.

Find a dealer tool
10 Easy to spot the tab, and the advanced search and plentiful customer reviews features are both excellent.

Social media
1 Nothing is apparent on the website apart from a link to post about Renault on Facebook and Twitter.

Mobile site
9 Not the prettiest and a little clunky, but good levels of information, so much better than most others.

Extras
7 Plenty of bits such as company information, van owners services and videos, but nothing outstanding.

Verdict 57%
Highs and lows, with the phone and email responses especially poor and at odds with an otherwise well-designed site with plenty of potential.



Toyota
www.toyota.co.uk/lcvs

Ease of use
1 Tough to spot where to go for van information from the main Toyota site, and there's nowhere to click through to from the main LCV area of the site.

Design
1 Odd that there's not even a picture of the Hilux, given the model's profile. It has the feel of a page tacked on the side of the core car offering.

Configuring tool
1 If there is one, or anything to help online users spec a Proace or Hilux, then we couldn't spot it.

Brochure download
4 It took a while to untangle that asking for it by email is the best way to get a brochure. Not an easy process, and the download function offers a digital magazine rather than pdf download.

Email response
10 The saving grace of the Toyota site – the response within 45 minutes was two-and-a-half hours better than any rival.

Phone help
6 In the middle of a batch of decent responses, maybe not as sparkling as the best.

Find a dealer tool
5 Straightforward if not advanced.

Social media
5 Car-dominated accounts for Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, as well as Google+, Instagram and Flickr.

Mobile site
5 The Hilux is available on the mobile site with a reasonable level of detail, as it's listed in with the car range, but nothing on Proace.

Extras
1 Little of note.

Verdict 39%
A site that doesn't give the impression Toyota is serious about light commercial vehicles. More will be needed when the Proace replacement comes in 2017.



Vauxhall
www.vauxhall.co.uk/vans

Ease of use
3 The van website has an irritating habit of defaulting back to the car site, making vans almost appear less of a priority.

Design
6 The black background is a little overwhelming but just about works. It's big, bold and has lots going on.

Configuring tool
7 Again defaults back to cars but is a good, straightforward configurator, and you can print or email the results.

Brochure download
1 It's a shame Vauxhall needs to capture data before you can download, and it defaults to cars when you click on the brochure tab.

Email response
9 Quickest site for actually finding and sending the email, and second one to respond. Plus we also received a follow-up asking if we needed any more info.

Phone help
9 Easy to find the number, and an answer was immediately forthcoming. Shame it's not a freephone number like VW.

Find a dealer tool
8 Quick or advanced searches, and a star rating of each dealer, but there's not enough detail, especially email contact.

Social media
2 Vauxhall is active on Twitter and Facebook, but it's car-dominated.

Mobile site
8 Again defaults to cars, but there are varying degrees of info depending on which model you are interested in.

Extras
8 Used vans, conversions and minibuses, offers, accessories and access to the van-specific in-house magazine are all present.

Verdict 61%
The bronze medal for Vauxhall, a site with many strengths but a couple of notable weaknesses. Trying to capture too much information was a downfall.



Volkswagen
www.volkswagen-vans.co.uk/

Ease of use
7 Straightforward to set off down the right path of the site.

Design
9 Nice-looking site, bright and bold with a big image.

Configuring tool
3 No configurator. There's plenty of information to be found but no way of building and specing a van.

Brochure download
5 Good level of detail, but price list is tough to come by.

Email response
3 You have to fill in email address and phone number boxes, but more than a week after the enquiry, we were still waiting for a response.

Phone help
10 A freephone number answered immediately and the answer was quickly forthcoming. Much better than the email experience.

Find a dealer tool
2 A big and bold page helping to find the van centre, but it's shorter on detail than most rivals, with things like directions, a dealer email address and ability to book a service all missing.

Social media
10 A specific light commercial vehicle Facebook and Twitter presence, something no other van manufacturer can match.

Mobile site
3 No mobile site, and a middling website to use from a mobile device.

Extras
6 Information on conversions, fleet, used vehicles, offers and technical detail. Nothing dramatic but some useful stuff.

Verdict 58%
Last year's winner is dethroned and drops down to fifth place amid a mixed bag of results for a good-looking site that doesn't quite provide the depth of others.

Live chat, but not so lively

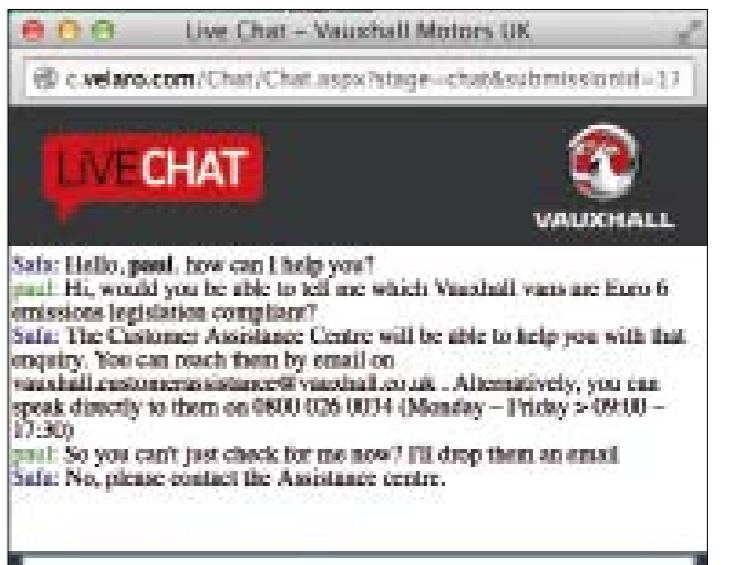
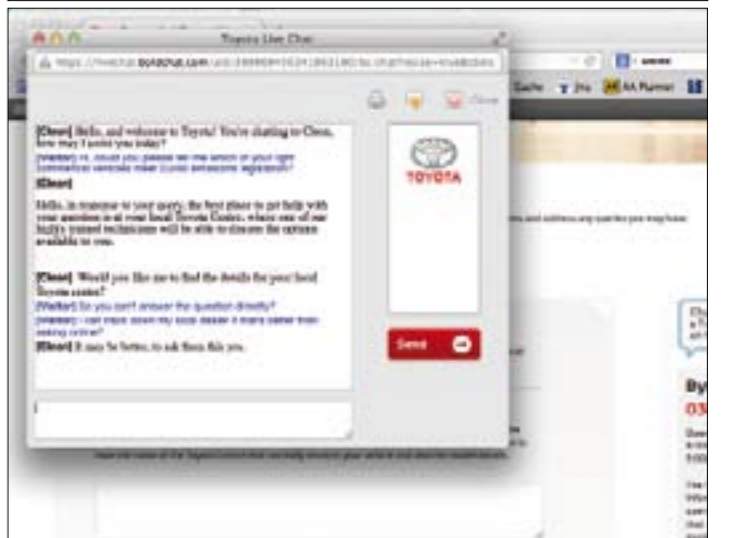
As an interesting aside, three manufacturers offer a live chat facility on their website as an alternative to emailing or phoning, but to be honest, they were all pretty useless. Renault, Toyota and Vauxhall were the three in question, so we tried asking the same question we emailed everyone, asking whether the company's vans meet the latest Euro6 emissions legislation.

- With Renault, the website tries to push you towards live chat rather than emailing, but we gave up after five minutes of the chat screen loading, so didn't even get to ask the question.
- It took 2min30sec for Toyota to get to the point where

the person at the other end of the conversation told me he couldn't help with my question, so I should contact the technicians at my local dealership.

- Vauxhall at least was a minute faster than Toyota in declaring it couldn't answer me over live chat, instead telling me to call or email the customer assistance centre.

It makes you question the point of the live chat function if all it's doing is telling you to call, email or go to a dealer anyway. It's a handy two-way conversation when it works, and credit to the three manufacturers that are at least trying it, but only of use if the people representing their brands are able to answer the questions.



Mercedes ponders free driver training van offer

Paul Barker

Mercedes-Benz Vans is considering offering free driver training with every new vehicle from 2016 as it looks to build on its industry-leading safety position.

The brand is planning to build a programme that would also cover elements such as efficient driving and what to do in the event of an emergency as well as safety, based on the driver Certificate of Professional Competence training heavy goods vehicles have to undertake.

"I learnt so much from CPC so I've taken it upon myself to suggest we want to do this for the van industry," Mercedes' UK vans managing director Steve Bridge told *BusinessCar*. "By the beginning of next year we will be able to talk about an imbedded driver training plan with every vehicle we sell."

"I don't have to; if customers don't take me up on it then it's up to

them, but at least I'm on the moral high ground."

He said the issue is that van driving is "occasionally a vocation, but most of the time the van is a tool of the actual job", for the likes of florists, plumbers or any other trade, and Bridge's opinion is that the issue of training isn't taken seriously until after an incident has occurred: "What we should be doing is before the event. All vehicles are completely safe until you put a driver behind the wheel, then they become erratic."

Mercedes already conducts its own dedicated and accredited CPC driver training programme at Wentworth Park, Barnsley, recently rebranded Mercedes-Benz North, and although Bridge said plans are "still at the scoping stage", it's likely the training will revolve around regional centres.

"We're not doing it from a sales perspective – that's not my aim; the aim is to make the brand perceived as a

responsible brand in the industry, and if that means spin-offs in additional volume or customers as a result, then great," said Bridge. "There are 3.3 million vans on the road and it will break six million by 2020 according to the SMMT figures, so someone has to take a stand."



Steve Bridge, MD of Mercedes CVs

BRIEFS

Fleet registrations up 9%

New fleet car registrations rose by 9% year-on-year in April to 93,095 registrations, according to the latest Society of Motor Manufacturer and Traders figures. Overall total registrations, including retail sales, rose by 5.1% to 185,778 units, which the SMMT said was the month's best performance since 2005.

Vivaros head for Home

Vauxhall has supplied Anglian Home Improvements with a fleet of 29 Vivaro vans. The firm said the new vans would help reduce its fuel consumption and whole-life operating costs. The vehicles are being used by the company's engineers, who drive an average of 30,000 miles a year.

Fleet Hire signs tyre deal

Vehicle management firm Fleet Hire has signed a three-year deal with ATS Euromaster to fit Michelin tyres across its fleet of 4500 cars and vans.

Others at fault for driverless car incidents, claims Google

Google has defended its autonomous vehicle trials in the US following a report from California's Department of Motor Vehicles that four accidents have involved self-driving cars during the past eight months.

Three out of the four vehicles on trial in California belonged to the technology giant, with the fourth owned by automotive parts supplier Delphi.

Chris Urmson, director of Google's self-driving car programme, said that the firm's cars have been involved in 11 accidents during the past six years.

He claimed Google's cars have covered 1.7 million miles of autonomous and

manual driving and "not once was the self-driving car the cause of the accident".

Urmson said in a blog post: "Rear-end crashes are the most frequent accidents in America, and often there's little the driver in front can do to avoid getting hit. We've been hit from behind... mainly at traffic lights but also on the freeway. We've also been side-swiped... and hit by a car rolling through a stop sign. And as you might expect, we see more accidents per mile driven on city streets than freeways."

Urmson said the collisions had been valuable for the testing phase and Google has a "detailed review process" to learn something from each incident.

Lex Autolease's fleet passes 300,000

Top BC50 leasing firm Lex Autolease has delivered its 300,000th vehicle in the UK.

It comes as the company aims to grow its fleet size to 375,000 by 2018.

Last year Lex grew by 7%, adding 10,000 cars and 11,000 vans to its fleet. It also saw total fleet assets increase to £3.3bn, a year-on-year growth of 10% following new product launches.

The 300,000th vehicle is part of a liveried fleet delivered to London-based

care provider Clece Care Services. The fleet has been taken on a sole-supply contract hire with maintenance basis. The vehicles will be used by nursing staff to travel between hospitals and patients' homes.

"Reaching this milestone sets us firmly on track to achieve our five-year plan of adding 100,000 vehicles to the fleet by 2018," said Tim Porter, managing director of Lex Autolease.

Audi researching new diesel fuel

Audi is producing its own synthetic diesel as part of a research project into creating CO₂-neutral fuels for the future.

The new fuel, titled e-Diesel, is created through a chemical process using CO₂ and water, and has powered an A8 3.0-litre diesel test vehicle.

Audi's lab tests have shown that e-Diesel is suitable for mixing with fossil diesel or for use as a fuel in its own right.

Reiner Mangold, head of sustainable product development at the German manufacturer, sees it as an important step to complement the brand's electric vehicle development.

He said: "In developing Audi e-Diesel, we are promoting another fuel based on CO₂ that will allow long-distance mobility with virtually no impact on the climate."

Ford supplies gas company

Ford is to deliver 189 Transit Custom LCVs to UK gas distribution company SGN. The vans will be used by engineers as emergency response vehicles.

SGN currently operates 400 vans across Scotland and southern England. It chose the Custom because it features a load-through bulkhead, which allows floor-level carrying of 3m-long gas pipes.

"This eliminates the need for our engineers to load heavy copper piping at higher than head height, so there is reduced potential for an accident," said Paul Davies, SGN fleet manager.

SGN's Transits are short-wheelbase, high-roofed models powered by Ford's 100hp 2.2-litre diesel engine.



Light commercial sales hit seven-year high



New LCV registrations surged resoundingly back to pre-recession levels in 2014, hitting the highest total since 2007 as confidence returned to the UK business sector, as **Paul Barker** reports

The UK market for light commercial vehicles returned to strength in style last year, as an 18.7% growth saw the market hit heights not seen since 2007, with 321,686 new vehicles up to 3.5t registered during 2014, according to figures from the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders.

That compares with 271,073 in 2013, itself the strongest year in five for the LCV market, a sector that acts as a barometer for the strength of the economic recovery due to companies not investing in new vehicles if they're not confident about the future of their business.

"There is an underlying business confidence to invest, and we're still working through some of the pent-up demand and backlog from where people delayed purchases," the SMMT's chief executive Mike Hawes tells *What Van?* "Plus the diversity of the market seems to be getting ever-greater; people's needs are changing and manufacturers are offering flexibility of choice."

Top of the pile

There's absolutely no surprise to see Ford top the manufacturer's chart,

and if nothing outrageous happens during 2015, this time next year the brand will have completed a phenomenal half a century at the top of the light commercial vehicle table. The brand was one of only three in the top 10 with above-average growth figures, recording a 21.3% increase on 2013 thanks to an influx of new models – Transit, Transit Connect and Transit Courier – and its lead at the top increased by more than 10,000 units over Volkswagen. At 42,281 units, that lead means Ford registered over double the number of vehicles of its nearest challenger, and the firm accounted for in excess of a quarter of all of the new light commercial vehicles in the UK last year.

Maintaining second place despite a market share that dropped from 13.6% in 2013 to last year's 12.5% was VW, which claimed supply problems on its two biggest-selling models – Transporter and Caddy. Those two are both being replaced during 2015, so it will be interesting to see what that does to registrations. Fortunately for VW, third-placed Vauxhall's growth was only 0.7 percentage points better at

9.7%, so it didn't significantly close in on a top two spot.

In fact it was in serious danger of being overtaken by Peugeot, which had a hugely impressive 2014, growing by 50.1% to get within 752 units of Vauxhall and jumping back above Mercedes and Citroen, the two brands it slid behind at the 2013 year-end. The growth of over 11,500 units can be pretty evenly split between the Partner and Boxer models, the latter facelifted last year, and left Peugeot 1403 units ahead of fifth-placed Mercedes which, like Citroen, recorded growth in line with the market.

Beneath the top six, there were some varied results despite places seven-14 remaining the same as 2013. Renault recorded the biggest growth after Peugeot, with a 40.0% increase taking its market share from 2013's 4.8% to 5.6% last year. Nissan, Iveco, Great Wall and Mini were the only four of the top 20 brands to record a reduction in volume last year. Nissan claims supply problems with the NV200 light van, which dropped out of the top 25 models from its position of 22 in 2013, while Iveco switched

to a new Daily model towards the end of 2014 and Mini withdrew from the LCV market thanks to production ending on the Clubman passenger car that its Clubvan was based on. No word yet on whether the BMW-owned brand's dabble in light commercials will be repeated.

Hyundai, which markets the aging iLoad in the UK, dropped out of the top 20 manufacturers chart, replaced by light truck manufacturer Mitsubishi Fuso's 178 3.5t units registered last year.

Revised modelling

The top 25 LCV models chart saw a change at the top, although it's a familiar one. The Transit Custom, which in 2014 enjoyed a first full year of sales of the entire range, grew by 229.9% to dethrone the full-size Transit at the head of the chart. In excess of one-in-10 new light commercial registered last year were a Custom.

That jump means last year's top four all drop a place, with the full-size Transit sliding significantly as the last of the smaller models that made up the Transit nameplate prior to the Custom's arrival flushed through.

As previously mentioned, Peugeot's Partner and Boxer models showed strongly, increasing registrations year-on-year by 46.4% and 88.7% respectively, while the other big winners were the Ford Transit Connect, up 120.1% and rising five spots to eighth, and the Renault Trafic, which rose into the top ten with 55.1% growth, despite a new model arriving mid-year.

As mentioned before, claimed supply problems saw the Caddy drop three places to ninth, down by 26.8% in a market up 18.7%, while further down the table the Isuzu D-max's five-place rise took it past Ford's Ranger and the Nissan Navara to become the UK's third-favourite pick-up.

It's also interesting to note that despite the top six light vans all making the top 15 of the sales

Top five in each sector

Light vans

Model	2014	2013	% change
Peugeot Partner	16,636	11,365	46.4
Citroen Berlingo	15,349	13,531	13.4
Ford Transit Connect	12,437	5650	120.1
Volkswagen Caddy	9719	13,286	-26.8
Fiat Doblo Cargo	7136	8211	-13.1

Heavy vans

Model	2014	2013	% change
Ford Transit	25,511	44,143	-42.2
Mercedes Sprinter	22,897	19,154	19.5
Peugeot Boxer	8566	4539	88.7
Volkswagen Crafter	6744	4811	40.2
Citroen Relay	5879	4338	35.5

Medium vans

Model	2014	2013	% change
Ford Transit Custom	33,516	10,158	229.9
Vauxhall Vivaro	19,364	18,177	6.5
Volkswagen Transporter	17,360	15,647	10.9
Renault Trafic	9191	5926	55.1
Mercedes Vito	4859	4614	5.3

Pick-ups

Model	2014	2013	% change
Toyota Hilux	8318	7596	9.5
Mitsubishi L200	6488	5527	17.4
Isuzu D-max	5502	4111	33.8
Ford Ranger	5462	4310	26.7
Nissan Navara	4533	4484	1.1

2014 SMMT Sales Figures

Top 20 LCV manufacturers of 2014

Marque	Movement	2014	2013	% change	% market share
1. Ford	-	82,519	68,054	21.3	25.7
2. Volkswagen	-	40,238	36,925	9.0	12.5
3. Vauxhall	-	32,619	29,736	9.7	10.1
4. Peugeot	▲ 2	31,867	21,230	50.1	9.9
5. Mercedes	▼ 1	30,464	25,667	18.7	9.5
6. Citroen	▼ 1	27,228	22,989	18.4	8.5
7. Renault	-	18,170	12,978	40.0	5.6
8. Fiat	-	12,629	12,019	5.1	3.9
9. Nissan	-	10,270	10,619	-3.3	3.2
10. Toyota	-	9611	8063	19.2	3.0
11. Land Rover	-	8344	6644	25.6	2.6
12. Mitsubishi	-	6946	5927	17.2	2.2
13. Isuzu	-	5502	4112	33.8	1.7
14. Iveco	-	2769	3275	-15.5	0.9
15. Renault Trucks	▲ 2	568	411	38.2	0.2
16. Great Wall	-	279	667	-58.2	0.1
17. Mini	▼ 2	278	694	-59.9	0.1
18. Isuzu Trucks	▲ 1	227	213	6.6	0.1
19. Ssangyong	▲ 1	197	168	17.3	0.1
20. Mitsubishi Fuso	NE	178	148	20.3	0.1

Source: SMMT

chart, neither the Mercedes-Benz Citan nor the Renault Kangoo it is based on make the top 25, which means they managed less than 4000 registrations in a sector where the leading vehicle was Peugeot's Partner on 16,636.

Sectors

The biggest area of growth in 2014 was the medium van segment, helped by new product in the form of Vauxhall's Vivaro and the Renault Trafic, coming on top of the dominance of Ford's Transit Custom. Vans between 2.0-2.5t increased registrations by 42.0%, while pick-ups and larger 2.5-3.5t vans were both broadly in line with the market. The big loser was the sub-2.0t sector, which was surprisingly down 5.3% in a rapidly growing market.

The sector leaders were Peugeot's Partner in the light van class, which replaced the now second-placed Berlingo, while in the medium van segment the Transit Custom knocked the Vauxhall Vivaro and VW Transporter down a spot each to claim number one in class, and Ford also took the heavy van category, with Transit retaining its position again ahead of Mercedes' Sprinter. The top Pick-up was once more the Toyota Hilux.

Getting heavy

There is also a modest van market over 3.5t, where legislation becomes more of an issue so registrations are much lower. A total of 6797 vehicles were registered at this weight level last year, just nine more than in 2013, and Mercedes-Benz topped the chart with 1889, 37 units ahead of Ford. Fiat's 1313 put it third, and there's a huge gap below the top three down to Iveco in fourth on 402, just a single registration ahead of Peugeot, which doubled registrations of heavy vans, and 16 in front of VW.

Looking to 2015, the SMMT's Hawes feels the strength of the light commercial vehicle sector should continue to see it outpace the new car market, due to there being greater chance of pent-up demand still working its way through to purchase. But he also warns that the general election adds a degree of uncertainty, depending on the outcome and future taxation increases or spending cuts as a result.

Key:

- ▲ Number of positions up
- ▼ Number of positions down
- No movement
- NE New entry

Top 25 LCV models of 2014

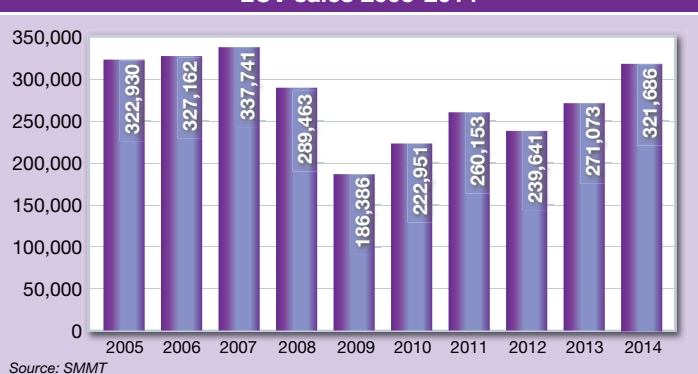
Range	Movement	2014	2013	% change	% market share
1. Ford Tran. Custom	▲ 7	33,516	10,158	229.9	10.4
2. Ford Transit	▼ 1	25,511	44,143	-42.2	7.9
3. Mercedes Sprinter	▼ 1	22,897	19,154	19.5	7.1
4. Vauxhall Vivaro	▼ 1	19,364	18,177	6.5	6.0
5. VW Transporter	▼ 1	17,360	15,647	10.9	5.4
6. Peugeot Partner	▲ 1	16,636	11,365	46.4	5.2
7. Citroen Berlingo	▼ 2	15,349	13,531	13.4	4.8
8. Ford Connect	▲ 5	12,437	5650	120.1	3.9
9. VW Caddy	▼ 3	9719	13,286	-26.8	3.0
10. Renault Trafic	▲ 1	9191	5926	55.1	2.9
11. Peugeot Boxer	▲ 7	8566	4539	88.7	2.7
12. Toyota Hilux	▼ 2	8318	7596	9.5	2.6
13. LR Defender	▼ 1	3940	5669	-30.5	1.2
14. Fiat Doblo Cargo	▼ 5	7136	8211	-13.1	2.2
15. VW Crafter	▲ 1	6744	4811	40.2	2.1
16. Vauxhall Combo	▼ 1	6644	4896	35.7	2.1
17. Mitsubishi L200	▼ 3	6488	5527	17.4	2.0
18. Citroen Relay	▲ 2	5879	4338	35.5	1.8
19. Isuzu D-max	▲ 4	5502	4111	33.8	1.7
20. Ford Ranger	▲ 1	5462	4310	26.7	1.7
21. Mercedes Vito	▼ 4	4859	4614	5.3	1.5
22. Renault Master	▲ 2	4786	3872	23.6	1.5
23. Nissan Navara	▼ 4	4533	4484	1.1	1.4
24. Vauxhall Movano	NE	4211	3248	29.6	1.3
25. Ford Fiesta Van	-	4044	3792	6.6	1.3

Source: SMMT

Registrations by sector

Sector	2014	2013	% change
Pickups	33,823	29,394	15.1%
4x4 vans	8763	6881	27.4%
Sub-2t vans	39,535	41,757	-5.3%
2.0-2.5t vans	56,257	39,613	42.0%
2.5-3.5t vans	183,308	153,428	19.5%
All LCVs under 3.5t	321,686	271,073	18.7%

LCV sales 2005-2014



Source: SMMT