

## Is it time for construction to go green?

The construction sector and industries throughout the western world depend upon cheap crude oil for use within their manufacturing processes and the machines they use to implement these processes. What is striking is that within the UK, construction accounts for 50% of all carbon emissions produced by machinery and production.

However, the industry as a whole is starting to change and recognise the problems of pollution and the long-term threats it poses to our planet. The UK government is beginning to pass legislation that stipulates construction firms should use green practices within their production process – and this includes green [commercial van](#) fleets.

Now that the diesel and petrol cars have been branded significantly harmful for the environment – the UK have widely recognised areas across the UK that are badly polluted with emissions. The government has committed to plans to ensure they reduce the level of pollution by 2040. For business owners, a fleet of reliable vehicles is a vital cog in the smooth running of their business. However, electric vehicles have a level of stigma attached – a smaller mileage range, longer time taken to recharge and less charging points than petrol stations. It can seem like a no brainer to keep running with a petrol or diesel fleet.

Not anymore – with significant developments in the electric vehicle market, and as plans from the government begin to get rolled out across the country, now could be the perfect time to start your fleet's transition to electric or hybrid engines.

### A successful year for electric

The electric vehicle industry experienced great success throughout 2017, as their most successful year as of yet. Recording the highest number of new registrations, the year witnessed an average of 4,000 new registrations per month, and progress is expected to continue throughout 2018 with the air pollution implications very much in the spotlight – ignorance and a lack of knowledge is no longer an excuse. The end of 2017 marked approximately 132,000 new electric car registrations and over 5,100 electric vans. This could be attributed to the government's plans to clean up the UK's air quality, or because there is now a better choice for van drivers and fleet managers.

Until recently, van drivers had a limited choice for an electric alternative. However, there are now more choice than ever before. Most big automotive brands who have a recognisable name in the electric vehicle market, have a van counterpart on the market too – Nissan, Renault, Peugeot and Mercedes to name a few.

### New innovations

The industry has been subject to criticism for the low level of charging points that are installed across the UK – as well as the time it takes to charge and the limited mileage range. However, new developments suggest that the market could have finally beaten some of the challenges.

Rapid charging points are the most desirable charging point as they only take 20 minutes to recharge an electric battery. If we are looking to build more charging points to cope with the new demand, rapid charging points should be a priority. Thanks to a multimillion pound deal with ChargePoint back in May 2017, InstaVolt are installing at least another 3,000 rapid charging points across fuel

station forecourts across the UK. In addition, researchers claim they could have developed an 'instantly rechargeable' method that recharges an electric battery in the same time as it would take to fill a gas tank – a solution to the biggest headache of electric vehicles.

And it looks like the limited mileage range could be improving too. Nissan have also recently launched their new Nissan Leaf vehicle with double the mileage range compared to previous models – a significant indicator that the same can be done in the pipeline for their electric van counterpart.

### Avoid toxin charges

As part of the government's plans to improve air quality across the UK, they plan to introduce clean air zones to the most polluted areas in the UK – mainly city centre routes. London and Oxford are amongst cities which are introducing Ultra Low Emission Zones and Zero Emission Zones to improve their air quality. Oxford plan to be the first zero emission city in the world by 2020. Other cities such as Leeds, Southampton and Derby are also amongst the cities who plan to introduce clean air zones in their city centres.

Affecting a large number of vehicles, those which do not comply with the clean air zone standards will encounter a daily toxin charge to access the zone – failure to pay the daily toxin charges can result in a penalty charge being issued to the driver or registered owner of the vehicle. Although, it has not yet been announced what these zones will mean for commercial vehicles right now, in the near future it is likely that the charges will be applied to all vehicles, even commercial used vehicles. Introducing electric vans to your construction fleet is the first step to avoiding being affected by the toxin charges on a daily basis. An ultra- low emission or zero emission vehicle will be able to drive freely throughout the zones without daily charges – areas, which as city centres, are likely to affect your line of work.

What do you think? Are you ready to make the transition to electric vans yet?