SOUNDS OF SILENCE

DPD’s first fully-electric ‘final mile’ delivery depot is now being served by a zero-emission FUSO eCanter. The truck wins top marks from its driver for its comfort and quietness.

Clean air act
The world’s first economically viable battery-powered truck, the FUSO eCanter has proved 100% reliable and is integral to DPD’s ambitious all-electric strategy.
Plug and play
Batteries of DPD's eCanter are restored to full capacity overnight, but up to 80% is also possible in less than an hour with direct current at a quick charging station.

Leading from the front
Having opened its first all-electric last-mile delivery depot in Westminster last October, DPD plans to add another seven across the capital.

Cool, calm and collected
Driver Michael Zammett says the absence of noise from his FUSO eCanter helps to make life at the wheel less tiring and stressful.

than enough; he will rarely cover half this distance in a full day's shift. "It's particularly when you're under pressure, to remain cool at the wheel. All this traffic can be frustrating at times, but there's nothing to be gained from getting stressed, it doesn't you got you there any quicker. Plus, of course, a relaxed, driven, is also a safer driver, and safety is DPD's number one priority."

The truck's smooth, near silent driveline complements this approach. Michael's eCanter is one of two supplied last year to DPD – others are in service in the capital with four milling giant Hovis and logistics leader Wincanton PLC. With its instant torque delivery, it is lightning quick from 0-30 mph, and Michael acknowledges: "When you first drive an eCanter it's the acceleration that is most striking. But what you then, very quickly come to appreciate, is that it's also so much quieter than a diesel-engined vehicle. The lack of noise and vibration makes the experience at the wheel far more enjoyable, and means I'm nothing like as tired at the end of the day."

The electric Canter shares the tight turning circle of its diesel- and hybrid-powered stablemates, and added by his reversing camera it's a simple task for Michael to manoeuvre his vehicle into position outside the smart new Westminster depot, so the process of unloading can begin. The first of eight such facilities which DPD plans to open in London - the second will be in Shoreditch - it employs an all-electric fleet of 18 vehicles to make final mile deliveries of up to 2 000 parcels per day. This depot is also home to the first DPD UK-owned Pickup shop, a dedicated access point for consumers collecting parcels; another 2 500 Pickup sites operate across the UK in partnership with brands such as Sainsbury's, Matalan and Halfords.

On returning to the London City Distribution Centre, Michael takes his statutory 45-minute break before reloading and setting out again on a round of general deliveries. First up this afternoon is a consignment of 63 crates of books for a leading retailer's branch in Bloomsbury, on the edge of the University of London campus. Then it's back over the Thames, this time for a 'drop' in Cobalt Square, Vauxhall, a stone's throw from both the Riverside headquarters of the security service MI6, and The Oval cricket ground.

It's here that we leave Michael, a driver who is delighted to be playing his own small part in shaping the future of transportation. "I feel privileged, being one of the first to drive a fully electric truck for DPD in the UK," he confides. "It's quite an honour to be honest."

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Reducing and neutralising our carbon footprint by providing smarter and more efficient urban delivery solutions, and investing in innovation, are at the heart of DPD’s DrivingChange programme. We want to be the leader in alternative fuel vehicles in the UK, and aim, ultimately, to move to an entirely zero-emission fleet. The FUSO eCanter is integral to our CV strategy. Aside from the fact that it produces zero tailpipe emissions and therefore offers exemplary environmental credentials, this vehicle is ideally suited to urban operation thanks to its combination of comfort, agility and high payload potential. We’ve had no issues during their first six months in service with either of our eCanter, and on the basis of their reliability and performance we look forward to commissioning more over the months and years to come. There remain significant external issues to be overcome in terms of both infrastructure support and all-electric vehicle on the scale we need, across the whole of Central London. But we will continue to work with the key stakeholders to realise our aims and support the Mayor of London and Transport for London’s ambition for a cleaner and less congested capital."

Rob Fowler, General Manager – Corporate Social Responsibility & General Planning, DPD