

Carbon footprint reduction: a Unison priority

'Greening' the fleet is a major focus for Unison, which, helped by driver demand for hybrid cars, has seen average carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions across its fleet reduce to 104g/km, well below the UK 2016/17 vehicle leasing average as measured by the British Vehicle Rental and Leasing Association of 113.1g/km.

The volume of hybrid cars on the Unison fleet is expected to further increase as existing vehicles reach the end of contract life and drivers go in search of lower company car benefit-in-kind tax bills and models that deliver first-class fuel economy.

What's more, with the political focus at national and local government level on improving urban air quality assisted with the expected introduction of Clean Air Zones, the possibility of plug-in cars being introduced to the fleet is being kept under review.

Mr Zadeh said: **"Unison provides its drivers with a flexible vehicle choice across four brands and 40-50 different models. Employees are voluntarily switching to hybrid and that is helping reduce Unison's carbon footprint, which is important."**

"As motor manufacturers introduce new low-emission models, including plug-in cars, Unison expects its fleet emissions to further reduce, which is good for image."

How Venson helps Unison look to the future

Unison is continually looking for its fleet operation to evolve along best practice lines and Mr Zadeh said: **"At formal quarterly review meetings with Venson we always discuss new issues taking account of what is happening in terms of legislation and initiatives from both government and local authorities as well as motor manufacturers."**

Fact-finding by Mr Zadeh through attendance at industry shows and seminars and keeping abreast of developments through the trade press and Venson's own newsletters and white papers ensures he remains in tune with best practice.

He concluded: **"I like to be aware of what is happening and how that will impact on Unison's fleet. With Venson's help I have that information available to me and have open access to discuss all matters with their experts. The partnership between Unison and Venson is working very well."**



Unison is one of the UK's largest trade unions, serving more than 1.3 million members. It represents full-time and part-time staff who work in a range of public services and utilities, although they may be employed in both the public and private sectors.

Across 12 UK regions – nine in England, and additionally offices in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales – and via more than 1,000 branches, Unison represents members, negotiates and bargains on their behalf, campaigns for better working conditions and pay and for public services. The regions are the main link between neighbouring branches and between branches and the organisation's national executive council.

Unison operates a current fleet of 255 cars. Presently the fleet comprises 126 diesel cars, 98 hybrid models – accounting for more than a third of the operation – and 31 petrol vehicles.

Cars are currently operated on a three-year/60,000-mile replacement cycle and mileage pooling ensures the possibility of end-of-contract mileage charges are minimised. Furthermore, contract flexibility enables individual vehicle mileages to be kept under constant review and rescheduled if out of line by 15%.

Service excellence is why Venson is Unison's fleet partner

Venson Automotive Solutions' ability to deliver a bespoke service to Unison was critical in the trade union selecting the vehicle leasing and fleet management company as its 'one-stop shop' provider in October 2011.

Following an initial three-year agreement for the supply of cars on contract hire with full maintenance and an accident management service, the relationship has been extended on a 12-month rolling basis. A recently signed fifth extension now takes the partnership through to November 2019.

Jonathan Zadeh, one of three procurement advisors at Unison and the organisation's fleet expert, said the trade union selected Venson following a major tender exercise and the shortlisting of three potential providers.

Mr Zadeh, who has been involved in managing fleet contracts and suppliers for nearly 10 years at Unison, explained that Venson had replaced one of the UK's largest vehicle leasing and fleet management companies.

Venson has long-time experience of managing a number of public sector vehicle leasing and fleet management contracts and Mr Zadeh said: **"We were impressed with Venson during the tender process. Due to the company's experience of working with public sector organisations and their fleets, Venson understood and was in tune with Unison's requirements, what we expected of them and what our drivers expected."**

"Venson as a smaller vehicle leasing and fleet management company has been able to deliver a bespoke service and manage all driver-related issues directly without reference to Unison."

A 'one-stop' telephone helpline enables Unison's car drivers to contact Venson directly where a dedicated customer service team and account manager is able to provide expert help and advice in, what Mr Zadeh described as, **"a timely fashion"** providing **"direct answers to direct questions"**.

He added: **"Costs are important to all organisations, including Unison, but it was the promise of service quality that won through because we did not want to be firefighting."**

Looking back over six years of service, Mr Zadeh said: **"Venson has lived up to Unison's expectations and has delivered in many areas. In-life contract relationships do not always run smoothly and there are bumps in the road, but it is how those issues are dealt with that makes a difference."**



New online vehicle quotation system to ease Unison administration

Unison is looking to extend its partnership with Venson through the addition of new services, initially an online vehicle quotation system for drivers.

The trade union continually keeps services provided under review and, following a pilot, is set to implement the online system in 2019.

Mr Zadeh said: **"Our current vehicle selection, ordering and quotation system is paper-based, very cumbersome and administratively burdensome. The new quotation system will be bespoke to match our car policy and will save significant administration time."**

Work-related road safety and accident management is a Unison focus

Unfortunately, road traffic accidents are a fact of life. Venson already provides an accident management service to Unison meaning that if an incident does occur a dedicated in-house team manages the problem acting as a central point of contact between all parties.

The accident management service includes: a 24x7 driver hotline, roadside recovery, claims management, vehicle downtime management including availability of a mobile bodyshop solution for smaller 'bent metal' repairs, uninsured loss recovery, non-fault accident management and pro-active risk management through detailed reporting and analysis.

Additionally, Venson offers its customers a comprehensive programme that promotes a responsible driving culture and minimises prosecution in the event of a crash. Called Venson Safeguard, it is a five-point action plan – elements of which are provided in partnership with RoSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) Fleet – that embraces: employee driving licence validation, documentation checks relating to privately-owned vehicles driven on business, driver risk assessment, driver training and total legislative compliance.