Operators Unite to Give Logistics Sector a JOLT

May 2nd 2024, London - Electric heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) are to be trialled across the UK in a new programme to help freight operators decarbonise their fleet.

Called Project JOLT – standing for Joint Operator Logistics Trial – the programme is led by The Centre for Sustainable Road Freight (SRF) and involves partners including John Lewis Partnership, Volvo Trucks UK, and Flexible Power Systems, a software company specialising in fleet management optimisation software for electric vehicles.

The electrification of the UK’s commercial fleets needs to happen urgently. Freight is hugely important; it contributed £13.6 billion to the economy in 2022*. 98% of our food and agricultural products are carried by road, mostly on HGVs. However, HGVs also account for 20% of CO2 emissions from domestic transport. Electrifying the UK’s HGV fleet would be the same as removing 13 million cars from our roads.

Ensuring a smooth transition to electrification is a multi-faceted and onerous challenge: data driven insights are key to ensuring the confidence for companies involved in logistics to begin or continue their journey towards Net Zero.

SRF was founded to help industry and government minimise carbon emissions from the road freight sector and is a collaboration between Cambridge University, Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh, the University of Westminster, and industry and government partners.

Professor David Cebon, a Professor of Mechanical Engineering at Cambridge University and director of The Centre for Sustainable Road Freight, established Project JOLT. He said: “The urgency of the climate crisis is driving adoption of electric heavy goods vehicles at a rate that few in the industry would have expected five years ago.

“Operators are purchasing and running these vehicles today in fleets of all sizes. But there’s still a long way to go to understand how whole fleets and industries can transition to electric heavy goods vehicles in a technically feasible way.”

The JOLT partners will pool data and learning from their experiences with eHGVs in retail, delivery, and manufacturing operations to help develop transition plans for their own businesses and for the wider logistics industry.

Specialists at Cambridge University and Heriot-Watt University will analyse and model data including vehicle and charger performance, operational efficiency, and costs across as many industry uses as possible.

Professor Philip Greer is an expert in sustainable transport and logistics at Heriot-Watt University and co-director of The Centre for Sustainable Road Freight. He said: “A key feature of this project is understanding how the different range and load capabilities of electric heavy goods vehicles – as well as downtime for charging – will affect the efficiency of operators and supply chains. We’ll do this by analysing logistics data and technical information collected through sophisticated computer simulations known as digital twins, to help us understand operations at scale.”

John Lewis Partnership, one of the UK’s best-known retailers, has joined Project JOLT and will use an eHGV from Volvo Trucks UK in their logistics operation. The vehicle, a Volvo FM 4x2 tractor unit, is a heavy-duty truck that can carry up to 42 tonnes and can cover up to 300km on a single charge.
Justin Laney, Partner and General Manager of Central Transport for John Lewis Partnership said: “We are delighted to be kick starting this important initiative, which will inform our journey beyond eliminating fossil fuel from our fleet by 2030 to achieving a zero-carbon fleet by 2035.”

Volvo Trucks delivered around 145,000 Volvo trucks worldwide in 2023 and offers a range of electric trucks in the UK and Ireland.

Amy Stokes, Head of Electromobility at Volvo Trucks UK and Ireland, said: “At Volvo Trucks, we are committed to the environment, innovation, and safety in maintaining our position as market leaders in a changing world. We want to ensure our customers can take their next steps to zero-emission vehicles for their fleets with confidence.”

Project JOLT partners will use electric vehicle fleet management software FPS Operate, provided by Flexible Power Systems. Its platform is a remote, cloud-based system that connects to electric vehicle chargers, vehicles, building metering systems, and operational software. The data collected is then used to provide automated reporting and analytics and to help optimise the scheduling of electric vehicle charging.

Flexible Power Systems’ Managing Director Michael Ayres said: “Transitioning to electric freight can bring risks and costs for business. With big data and automated management, we can inform investment decisions and take some of the risk out of the transition of road freight traffic to near zero emissions by 2050.”

Parties interested in joining the Project JOLT scheme should email SRF on vl270@cam.ac.uk or call Guy Grange from FPS on 01342 360240.

*Source Gov.uk

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About the Centre for Sustainable Road Freight (SRF)

The Centre for Sustainable Road Freight brings together multi-disciplinary teams of researchers and industry leaders to improve road freight efficiency and reduce its environmental impact. Its purpose is to research engineering and organisational solutions to make road freight economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable. It comprises a mix of industry and academia. The latter includes University of Cambridge, and Heriot-Watt University. www.csrf.ac.uk

For further information contact SRF on VL270@cam.ac.uk or +44 7792 346629

About the John Lewis Partnership

The John Lewis Partnership is the UK’s largest employee owned business and parent company of our two cherished retail brands - John Lewis and Waitrose, which are owned in Trust by over 74,000 Partners.

We have 34 John Lewis shops plus one outlet and 329 Waitrose shops across the UK, along with johnlewis.com and waitrose.com. We also have two international sourcing offices, a soft furnishings factory, various distribution centres, three Waitrose & Partners cookery schools, a content production hub, heritage centre and our own Waitrose & Partners farm.

For further information contact Eleanor Gillingham, Communications Manager, Eleanor.gillingham@waitrose.co.uk

About Flexible Power Systems

Flexible Power Systems (FPS) is a software and charge point services company that works across all classes of commercial vehicle and at every stage of the electrification journey from planning and build to operations and maintenance. FPS is a systems integrator making the many complex parts of an EV ecosystem (vehicles, chargers, power management, data, and IT systems) work individually and collectively. Doing this reduces capital and operating costs whilst improving reliability and improving operating efficiency and resilience. www.flexpowersystems.com

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About Volvo Trucks

Volvo Trucks supplies complete transport solutions for discerning professional customers with its full range of medium- and heavy-duty trucks. Customer support is provided via a global network of dealers with 2,200 service points in about 130 countries. Volvo trucks are assembled in 12 countries across the globe. In 2023 approximately 145,000 Volvo trucks were delivered worldwide. Volvo Trucks is part of the Volvo Group, one of the world’s leading manufacturers of trucks, buses, construction equipment and marine and industrial engines. The group also provides complete solutions for financing and service. Volvo Trucks’ work is based on the core values of quality, safety and environmental care.

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