

Away day **DOUBLE**

With more than 170 trucks to see at MAN's Trucknology Days event, a visitor could easily be distracted. However, Brian Weatherley stayed firmly focused on two new products that are definitely UK-bound

At *Transport Engineer* I try to steer clear of superlatives. However, the word 'extravaganza' hardly does justice to the Trucknology Days event held by MAN at its Munich HQ 'TruckForum' and test track in March. The three-day display attracted some 7,000 visitors and showcased more than 170 MAN products alongside 90 supplier exhibitors.

But with only a day to take it all in, I was determined not to be distracted by the plethora of vehicles on show, be they 631bhp Special Types heavy hitters, 'standard' long-haul and distribution tractors, agricultural and construction trucks, fire and municipal rigids and even a self-propelled wood chipper. Instead, I took the opportunity to get an early preview of two products that are UK-bound.

First, I drove a Euro 6 TGX 460 tractor (right) with the new Tipmatic '12+2' two-pedal automated mechanical transmission based on the latest GRS905 14-speed box Opticruise auto developed by fellow VW Group member Scania, but with MAN's own shifting software and control electronics (see also 'Engineering anatomy: Introducing the new D38 engine', <http://is.gd/siluhe>). Tipmatic 12+2 is currently fitted to all 4x2 TGS and TGX tractors powered by the D26 engine.

Control-wise there's no difference between the regular 12-speed Tipmatic and 14-speed Tipmatic 12+2. The selector dial is still located comfortably next to the driver's seat, while manual

shifts are made as before using the column-mounted lever. What was clear from our drive is how slick-shifting the 12+2 auto is. Pulling away from rest, changes were extremely smooth and one can easily prompt upshifts with gentle control of the throttle pedal. The bottom line is that the Opticruise GRS905 works just as well as the Tipmatic 12+2 (with MAN's own control software) in the TGX and TGS, as it does in Scania's R and S range.

Right now the majority of TGX/TGS tractors, including 6x2s, will continue to use the popular 12-speed Tipmatic based on ZF's latest TraXon two-pedal auto. However, it will be interesting to see if there is demand from UK 44-tonne tractor buyers for the extra two low/crawler ratios offered by Tipmatic 12+2. Given the

predominance of the 6x2s over 4x2s in the UK tractor market, we'll have to see if MAN offers it to a wider customer base. Either way it's an obvious example of the heavy truck component-sharing strategy between MAN and Scania, which also includes some cooperation on front axles.

Meanwhile, the event also gave me the opportunity to poke around the static displays of two models of MAN's recently-unveiled TGE light commercial range that made its British debut at the CV Show last month, a high-roof panel van and a crew cab variant.

Though TGE is an obvious example of 'badge engineering' - it's based on the Crafter courtesy of fellow VW Group member Volkswagen - it clearly has MAN values, from the iconic Lion badge on its bonnet to its tough, no-nonsense interior.



While MAN Truck & Bus UK describes TGE as “a foray into new territory for MAN” adding “the long-established truck brand enters the world of light commercial vehicles for the first time”, it could be said that the Munich manufacturer’s previous G90 range (based on VW’s original LT) beat it to the punch below 7.5 tonnes back in the 1980s and ‘90s. However, there’s no doubting TGE’s LCV credentials, or the breadth of its range that stretches from 3.0- to 5.5-tonne gvw, taking in front, rear and all-wheel drivetrains and panel van and chassis cab variants. Maximum gvw is eight tonnes.

TGE is built at MAN’s all-new Wrzèsnia assembly plant in Poland alongside VW Crafter models. All TGE versions are powered by the same 2.0-litre four-cylinder VW diesel used in the Crafter, with identical 100.6, 120.3 and 138bhp ratings delivered by the single-turbo variant, and 174.5bhp from the bi-turbo diesel. Transmission choices are between the standard six-speed manual or optional eight-speed auto, both supplied by ZF.

Panel van models are based on two wheelbases with three body lengths and roof heights providing load volumes stretching from 9.9 to 18.4m³. Chassis cabs have the same two 3.6 and 4.49m wheelbase options, allowing platform body lengths from 3.5 to 4.7m, and come with a choice of standard day or four-door six-man crew cab. There’s a lot to like about TGE, not least its build quality, which is typically Teutonic and solid.

The main instruments and controls also are well laid out, while the dash-mounted gear-lever (now pretty much



standard in all panel vans) allows easy access across the cab. On the dual front passenger seat, the seat back nearest the driver folds down to provide a neat tray table and cup holder. There’s an abundance of storage, too, even before you add the optional overhead trays.

The TGE’s driving position is equally good: its steering wheel adjusts for rake and height, and has the same ‘flattened’ bottom quadrant as the steering wheel found on Scania’s new R and S tractors – proof that good design ideas are shared throughout the VW Group. Moreover, the tough floor covering and trim looks particularly durable and capable of surviving fleet service.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect concerning TGE is where it will sit in the UK LCV marketplace. With Crafter already well-established in the heavy van (3.0-3.5-tonne gvw) sector the greatest sales opportunity for TGE (if not the biggest volumes) could well be higher up in the 3.51- to 6.0-tonne market, where it will be competing against Mercedes’ Sprinter and the Iveco Daily. Last year the sector saw registrations hit 7,685 units, albeit with over half of them being sold for minibus conversions. While MAN Truck & Bus UK will initially concentrate on TGE commercial sales, minibus conversions could follow later.

With growth in heavy vans and chassis cabs continuing to be driven by the home delivery market, there is clearly potential for TGE among fleet buyers. It could also appeal to those LCV operators that don’t want a full-size, truck-based 7.5-tonner – but who do require similar payloads from a smaller-sized vehicle, whether based on a bodied chassis cab or panel van. For them, the 5.5-tonne TGE looks an attractive alternative. For chassis cab buyers, MAN will offer a ‘one-stop shop’ drive-away body service for TGE with tipper, Luton and dropsiders. RHD prices were to be revealed at the CV Show.

As TGE is only being sold through its truck dealerships, customers used to vans may be in for a new experience. MAN Truck & Bus UK says: “The new TGE sees MAN transferring all its usual customer-orientated services from the truck business into the light sector.” That will include MAN’s ProfiDrive driver training – a strong USP when few, if any, light commercial buyers (especially in the retail sector) have access to the level of driver training provided by heavy truck manufacturers. And although, inevitably, there will be some market overlap between Crafter and TGE, it will be a minor consideration when set against the desire of the VW Group to keep its Wrzèsnia plant, which has a production volume of some 100,000 units, running at full capacity. **TE**