

NHS Lothian proves two into one does go

NHS Lothian has demonstrated its commitment to value for money by investing in a specially-adapted Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 4x4 van.

When fitted with a snowplough blade and gritting hopper, the 5-tonne Sprinter crewcab can be employed to keep hospital and health centre car parks, access roads and ambulance bays clear of snow and ice.

But because both the blade and hopper are demountable, the vehicle does not have to stand idle when not required for winter maintenance duties.

Instead, it is used by NHS Lothian's estates management team to transport grass-cutting machinery and for general utility work.

Supplied by Central Belt dealer Western Commercial, the

new Sprinter 516CDI has a factory-built seven-man crewcab which features three-point belts on all seats.

The vehicle is the subject of a lease agreement with Automotive Leasing, a division of LeasePlan and long-standing supplier to NHS Lothian. The all-wheel-drive

chassis cab's alloy tipping body has been developed by George Newberry Coachbuilders, based in Coatbridge, while the 2.3m EZ-Mount DrivePro snowplough and 1,500-litre Polyhawk hopper are by US manufacturer Meyer.

NHS Lothian estates operations

officer Ian Strachan says: "We briefly considered another manufacturer's 4x4 chassis, but it was too expensive, and too big for our purposes. However, the Mercedes-Benz Sprinter is just the right size.

"It is sufficiently compact to access tight areas, but able to carry a decent payload, and the drivers love it – which is not entirely surprising, given that our previous winter maintenance vehicles had old-fashioned leaf springs."



Added extras for Age UK wheelchair-friendly minibus



Age UK Calderdale and Kirklees has a new Citroën 12-seater wheelchair accessible minibus, from Essex-based minibus conversion specialist Stanford Coachworks.

The Relay L4 H2 long wheel base is one of four vehicles delivered in the last

12 months from Stanford, adding to another four vehicles, similarly adapted, provided by Stanford in 2007 and 2009.

The new bus requirement was urgent, owing to a new contract for Age UK C&K, so Stanford provided its demonstrator, via Toomey Leasing of Chester – with the conversion taking less than two weeks to complete.

Its high-roof, 2.2lt 120bhp minibus came with an extremely high specification with additional optional extras including Eberspacher climate control, satellite navigation, mobile phone preparation and a reversing camera with fold-away monitor.

"In normal circumstances, our budget wouldn't allow for the optional extras," comments Averil Thompson, care services executive for Age UK C&K. "Our ex-demonstrator was loaded with extras and, with only 5,000 miles on the clock, Stanford offered us a real knockdown on the price tag."

The base vehicle has air suspension, with a factory fitted near side sliding door and a 600mm wide electric side step, with fold-out, high visibility rails. Semi-recessed low profile Unwin tracking system on a SCW M2 tested floor was also fitted to this bus, allowing easy access and the securing of up to four wheelchair passengers, after the removal of the 11 detachable M2 Pheonix Blenheim single seats.

Hyvacare benefits are black and white for Zebra

"Our trucks operate in one of the most arduous sectors of the whole road transport industry. Downtime is very expensive. So why would I not want HyvaCare to provide service cover for my skiploaders?"

That's the straightforward view of Roger Bird, director of Taurus Waste Recycling, trading as Zebra Waste. Part of the 40-strong Taurus fleet, Zebra operates both Hyva skiploaders and hookloaders, working in a wide range of waste, demolition and recycling duties. And key to the company's ability to provide efficient and reliable service, says Bird, is Hyva's fixed price R&M scheme that he believes minimises unplanned downtime.

"Hyva comes down and goes right through the vehicles every three months," says Bird. "Any parts that need routine replacement are covered by the fixed price contract. If we get any unforeseen issues, we just phone and they get it sorted."

What works for Zebra's Hyva bodywork also works for its chassis, too, with all the company's 4x2 and 8x4 Axor models being similarly covered with R&M contracts from Mercedes-Benz, and all work carried out by local dealer Pentagon.

