



THE BIGGER PICTURE

WHETHER A LIFESTYLE OR WORK CHOICE, YOU WANT THE BEST BLEND OF COMFORT, PRICE AND PRACTICALITY FROM YOUR 4x4 COMMERCIAL

TIME AND MOTION

IF YOUR 4x4 COMMERCIAL TOWS A TRAILER, CHANCES ARE THAT YOU'LL NEED TO FIT A TACHOGRAPH

Vehicle and licence legislation with regard to weights falls into two categories: permissible and actual. Driver legislation relates to permissibles. The licence category is determined by the gross weight of the vehicle, or in the case of a minibus or coach its number of seats.

Most on-road legislation relates to actuals. Overloading, speeding, exceeding driver hours (in the case of commercials) relate to actuals. Obviously, you cannot be prosecuted because your vehicle is *capable* of exceeding the speed limit.

However, in legislation relating to tachographs, the permissibles really matter – you are not excused tachograph legislation when running unladen for example.

Tachographs relate to commercial operation of vehicles or vehicle/trailer combinations of which MAM (Maximum Authorised Mass) exceeds 3500kg, no matter what the *actual combined mass* in operation. Therefore, a 4x4 commercial which, when towing a trailer for commercial reasons, has a MTM (Maximum Train Mass) exceeding 3500kg would need to be operating a tachograph, even if both vehicle and trailer were unladen and weighing less than 3500kg combined, since it is the permissible weight which matters, not the actual.

However, it must be for commercial purposes. Tow your own rally car on a trailer at the weekend and you don't need a tachograph, but if you deliver cars between dealerships for payment, you do.

The 4x4 commercial sector includes an increasingly diverse number of designs. Traditionally one thinks of the 4x4 pick-ups, but a number of manufacturers has joined Land Rover's traditional market to offer van versions of their 4x4 station wagons. These tend to trail the pick-ups for payload, only by 45kg in the case of a Defender 90, but as much as 670kg when comparing a Mitsubishi L200 4x4 single cab to its Shogun van sister. In the case of the Defender it is purely the additional weight of the body work, the van sides, roof and full tailgate. With the Shogun, it is a totally different base vehicle, with a bigger engine and much more sophisticated driveline. These considerations of payload against refinement run right through this sector.

At the other end of the scale something like a Renault Kangoo 4x4 van is more of an all-weather machine than a true off-roader, with the Defender 90 being a complete contrast. Here, off-road ability is paramount. The Land Rover is more likely to carry a one or two-man technical crew to a remote site, its cargo merely tools, than to be used as a serious load lugger – its much higher running costs dictating its choice only if really necessary for the task.

Towing is a further major use of these vehicles, but consider that tachographs may be required. (see side panel). There are practical considerations too. Pick-ups tend to be favoured over vans for their rear three-quarter visibility when trailer reversing, and Land Rovers are liked too as they can operate in low-range gear for such tasks without risking transmission wind-up, which affects all the part-time 4x4 vehicles. Even the Shogun, with its sophisticated multi-mode set-up, locks the centre differential when low range is selected.

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

When it comes to payload the Mitsubishi L200 4x4 Single Cab leads the pack with a massive 1200kg. Of the Double Cabs the Mazda leads with 1068kg although it's only the driver's lunchbox which makes the difference from the Nissan's 1065kg allowance.

PLAYING THE NUMBERS

Historically, the running cost data calculated by vehicle finance companies has only been utilised by medium to large fleet operators. In the commercial environment just a fraction of one pence per mile is of great significance when multiplied by 60 to 100,000 miles and applied across a fleet of hundreds or maybe even thousands of vehicles.

Nowadays though, these figures are of equal importance to the private motorist or one-man-band small business operator. The CPM

(Cost Per Mile) figure is king and contract hire agreements and private PCP schemes use this figure for their calculations. It is basically a sophisticated crystal-ball gazing exercise but takes into account depreciation from real trade and auction data, the fuel cost using the UK average pump price and the maintenance costs not only supplied by the manufacturer for routine servicing, but also real world evidence of tyre wear and repair work.

This data is historical and

although fleet sizes give a huge averaging-out of error, brand new vehicles on the market tend to have less accurate figures initially, which is something to bear in mind when shopping around for that PCP scheme.

To calculate your own potential cost per mile when using the two wide parameters we have set here, bear in mind that mileage has a lesser effect on depreciation than age does, but a considerable penalty in contract hire and PCP agreements.



Of the vans, the Nissan Terrano van leads with 785kg of payload but special mention must go the little Renault Kangoo 4x4 with an impressive 600kg capacity.

The Renault takes the crown for the best productivity, too, with that 600kg payload and running costs over 100,000 miles of just 15.13 pence per mile. However, it's not an off-roader.

Nor does it have the image the private buyer demands. Few vans do, but the Discovery and Shogun offer sophisticated drivelines and interior equipment. Payloads, however, are 680kg for the Discovery and just 530kg for the Shogun, less than half that of its stable mate the L200. Running costs are high too,