

NEW TAXI UNVEILED

Mercedes-Benz has launched their new 'London Taxi' in partnership with KPM-UK. The new taxi, the first alternative converted vehicle to be approved by the PCO, offers the London trade an alternative taxi which meets the CoF, thanks to the addition of a steering rear axle, making the already-nimble vehicle even more manoeuvrable. The new model is based on the Vito Traveliner minibus and built at the high-tech Mercedes-Benz van plant in Vitoria, northern Spain. Standard vehicles are adapted for use as cabs in the Coventry factory of engineering specialist One80 and are being retailed by KPM-UK in Bethnal Green.

Steve Bridge, Mercedes-Benz UK's Van Sales & Marketing Director, says: "The Vito Taxi is a truly ground-breaking vehicle, offering London's cab drivers a genuine alternative for the first time in many years to the ubiquitous LTI. It's a fantastically versatile taxi, superbly comfortable and fuel-efficient, and boasting a comprehensive array of active and passive safety features. With the adaptation package designed in conjunction with KPM-UK and One80, the Vito Taxi is ideally suited to the role."

Mercedes Vitos are already in service as taxis and private hire vehicles in cities across the UK and throughout Europe, but it is the adaptations which have been carried out to the new model that tailor it specifically for work on London's streets. Features include a fully-adjustable, leather-clad

Comfort seat, unprecedented width and leg room, combined with a steering wheel that is adjustable for both height and reach to provide the perfect driving position for cabbies of all shapes and sizes. The cockpit and cab, which are separated by an attack-resistant panel, have separate heating and air-conditioning controls.



The Vito has an expansive passenger compartment with seating for six people – three facing forwards and three on fold-down, rear-facing seats. Wide sliding doors on both sides can be opened electronically at the touch of a button. Both doors are also fitted with driver-operated electric steps, and a lightweight wheelchair ramp is carried in the boot.

In order to meet the 25ft turning circle requirement of the CoF, the rear-steer axle is mated to a Low Speed Manoeuvrability system. Together, these provide the Vito with all of the agility it needs to weave a path through the city traffic.



The Mercedes-Benz name is synonymous with safety and all seats have full three-point safety belts; the cockpit is also equipped with a driver's airbag. Other standard safety features include the innovative Adaptive ESP® stability system, which not only helps to prevent skids and keep the vehicle stable, but also varies its settings depending on the load being carried.



Powered by the well-proven Mercedes-Benz 2.2-litre common-rail diesel engine, which is renowned for its refinement, reliability and fuel efficiency, it meets all of the latest emissions standards. Vito vans powered by versions of the same engine recently came first and second in their category in the AA/ALD Mileage Marathon, the winner recording a stunning 55.04mpg over the 330-mile trip. This engine is mated to a fully automatic five-speed gearbox with Tiptronic mode. Steve Bridge said at the launch: "A huge amount of planning has gone into creating a taxi that meets all the needs of London's cabbies and cab passengers – and we believe the Vito Taxi is the perfect vehicle for this job."

Peter Da Costa and the team at KPM are offering the Vito taxi exclusively in the Greater London area. In a separate showroom, alongside the LTI dealership which KPM has held since 1989, the new taxi has already been test driven by a number of drivers. Peter Da Costa spoke of the project to bring the new taxi to the market place. He said: "I am delighted to have been part of the comprehensive team that has worked tirelessly for the last three years and I am very proud to now represent two of the world's finest taxi manufacturers. Cab drivers and passengers in London will now have a choice of vehicle and we as a company will continue to look after the driver's needs, something we have done successfully since 1975."



In PCO Note 13/08, Dave Stock, Head of Service Delivery at the PCO, said: "The Public Carriage Office (PCO) can confirm that it has now formally approved a Mercedes-Benz Vito Taxi as a new type of vehicle that can be licensed for use as a taxi in London. This vehicle meets the prescribed conditions set out in the Transport for London (TfL) - PCO 'Conditions of Fitness' 2007 and can, with immediate effect, be presented for licensing inspection by the PCO service provider SGS UK Ltd."

