

TPS

INSIDER

THE BIG READ

COVID fightback – how garages are reacting to the crisis

GROUP ICONS

Highway heroes – best of the blue light vehicles

5 MINUTE INTERVIEW

Tales of lockdown life



for Volkswagen Group
Genuine Parts

HELPING YOU TO BE **GENUINE HEROES** TO YOUR CUSTOMERS



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save the day for your customers.



for Volkswagen Group
Genuine Parts



Warren Richards
Head of Group
Parts Operations

HELLO AND WELCOME...

...to this special issue of TPS Insider.

With the COVID-19 crisis affecting all our lives, this issue will focus on how the TPS network and customers have responded positively to challenges posed by the pandemic.

The Big Read will take a look at how independent garages affected by the COVID-19 lockdown and restart, are reacting and continuing to adapt.

We have 5 minute interviews with TPS staff and customers who have proved themselves as Genuine Heroes during lockdown and beyond.

In Group Icons, we celebrate the blue light Group Vehicles whose reliability and performance have made them highway heroes to our emergency services.

For Business Builder, we chat with independent Volkswagen Group specialist Quattro Tech about how introducing best practice COVID-19 secure measures has helped maintain both customer confidence and profitability.

I hope you enjoy this edition and the positive stories featured. Please take care, stay safe and we'll speak again soon.

All the best, Warren.

W. Richards

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PULL OUT

THANK YOU FROM TPS
A message to our customers

We'd love to know what you think and what you'd like to see in future issues.

Email us at:
tpsinsider@vwg.co.uk

Visit us at:
tps.trade

Or message us via our social media:



tradepartsspecialists



TPSTradeParts

DORMANT VEHICLES

By utilising data and expertise from within the Volkswagen Group, we look at the consequences of vehicles being left dormant as a result of a lockdown.

With ongoing restrictions, vehicle usage is likely to remain low for a while; the result of people working from home and limiting their journeys. Long periods of inactivity or limited vehicle usage can affect the performance and reliability of a number of vehicle components.



Batteries

Most modern 12V batteries can withstand a few weeks of inactivity, but this depends on various factors including their age, the vehicle's electrical consumers, and even the weather conditions.

Higher temperatures (like we saw in early August) speed up the chemical reaction inside a battery. The mixture of acid and water generates heat which, combined with gaseous venting, causes the liquid to evaporate. When the fluid level gets too low it can damage the battery's internal plates.

The rate of discharge is also influenced by the electrical consumers that remain connected, even when the ignition is turned off – systems such as alarms, immobilisers, ECUs and other components.

Short, infrequent journeys take more charge from the battery than the alternator can replace. Starting the engine uses around 5% of a battery's power, and typically needs a half-hour journey to replace it via the vehicle's alternator.

Regardless of the cause, leaving a battery's charge below 80% can lead to permanent damage. A charge level below 12.4V for a long period of time leads to sulphate crystals forming and hardening inside the battery, preventing the chemical reaction required to produce electrical energy.

Another consequence is acid stratification. This is where the battery's acid becomes much stronger at the bottom of the battery. Testing may still show a high voltage, but the battery will be unable to supply enough current to start the engine.



TOP TIPS

Complete a full battery check to determine its health, regardless of whether it has sufficient charge to start the engine. Testing the reserve capacity is particularly important on EFB and AGM batteries as it indicates whether the battery is strong enough to support the stop-start system.

TPS supply batteries for all makes and models thanks to our Genuine, FourPlus, Yuasa and Quantum product ranges.



Braking components

Issues such as corrosion on the brake discs and calipers seizing up can occur when vehicles have been left standing for long periods.

Minor surface corrosion on the face of the discs can be removed with brake cleaner or simply by applying the brakes. However, a seized caliper or the parking brake failing to release is less straightforward and can cause permanent damage to both pads and discs.

Electronic parking brakes are just as susceptible as cable operated systems, so it's also worth checking that they're functioning correctly.

TOP TIPS

Inspect the condition of the brake discs and calipers for excessive corrosion, and test the parking brake.

TPS offers a range of Genuine and FourPlus brake kits should replacement be required.



Diesel Particulate Filters

Limiting a modern diesel vehicle to very short journeys at low speeds can cause a build-up of soot in the DPF as it won't have enough time to complete the required regeneration.

The DPF needs to reach a high temperature in order to clear the soot that accumulates. So, the vehicle must be running at the correct temperature and travelling at a constant speed for a period of time for the regeneration to be completed.

If the DPF is unable to regenerate, the soot will build up inside the filter, reducing engine performance and ultimately leading to the vehicle going into limp mode. A dashboard warning light gives advanced notice of an issue but those who haven't experienced this problem won't know how to resolve it.

It's also worth remembering that an engine warning light on the dash is an MoT failure – as is the permanent removal of the DPF to get around the problem.

TOP TIPS

Educate customers on the impact that short journeys can have on their DPF, and what they need to do to facilitate a regeneration. This information is usually in the owner's handbook.



Tyres

Deformation or 'flat spots' are a potential issue on vehicles that have been left stationary for long periods.

The severity of the flat spot comes down to how heavy the car is, the amount of time it's been left standing, tyre pressure, and the ambient temperature. Tyres will naturally lose pressure during periods of inactivity as the rubber is porous. Older tyres usually suffer more from these issues than newer ones.



TOP TIPS

Check the age of the tyres, pressures and look for any signs of deformation.

STEPPING UP TO A LOCKDOWN

The last few months have been a challenge, and we're proud to say that it was a challenge that TPS was able to step up to. It was hugely important to keep operational during the national lockdown, to help keep the country moving and critical vehicles on the road.

To do so our people had to adapt and switch local services to a national level. The figures here illustrate the dedication and effort that everyone put in to help customers during times of need.

WE KEPT THE **PARTS** ROLLING



Total customer interactions

42,907



Total invoices processed

590,918



Total calls answered

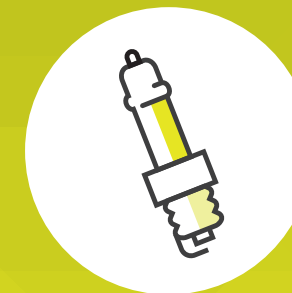
833,908

WE KEPT THE **SUPPLIES** COMING...



Total PPE items donated

72,000



Total parts supplied

1,469,265



Total miles covered

2,886,321

AND THE **EMERGENCY SERVICES** ON THE ROAD



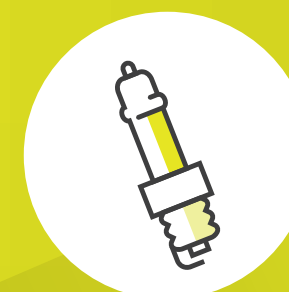
Blue light customers

19



Blue light invoices processed

2,424



Blue light parts supplied

12,187

The blue light customers we supported

With special thanks to...

East Midlands Ambulance | East of England Ambulance Service | Hampshire Police
Essex Police Transport Services | Kent Police | London Ambulance Service NHS Trust
North West Ambulance Services | Northern Ireland Police Service
Scottish Police | West Midlands Ambulance

POWERING BLUE LIGHT



Here Steven Cowell (above), Technical Sales Manager for Volkswagen Group Fleet Services and Barry Hamblin, Cardiac Responder for the Leeds Medical Transfer Ambulance Service offer their personal insights into why Group Vehicles have become established icons for the emergency services.

The COVID-19 crisis continues to place an unprecedented demand on the UK's emergency services.

The uses and requirements that emergency vehicles face are as varied as the range of Volkswagen Group Vehicles servicing the demands. Beyond the traditional police, ambulance and fire services, emergency service vehicles are used for everything from bomb disposal, to organ transportation, to national security emergencies; so finding the right vehicle is essential, and Volkswagen Group Vehicles have a proud history in meeting those needs.

The ŠKODA Octavia leads the way. In 2019 it accounted for around 25% of all ŠKODA blue light vehicles. The same year saw the Octavia Estate become the best-selling emergency services model, with a 208% year-on-year increase.

Steven Cowell said: "ŠKODA models are a longstanding emergency services favourite. They're easy to equip with blue light technology and offer reliability, efficiency and performance.

"With its ability to meet the demands made on it, including performance capabilities and carrying all the specialist kit emergency service vehicles can require, the Octavia ticks all the boxes."

ŠKODA models such as the Superb and the Kodiaq are hot on the Octavia's tracks. The Superb is increasing in popularity and a pair of ŠKODA Superb Estates recently went into service with the Leeds Medical Transfer Ambulance Service (MTAS).

Barry Hamblin, MTAS Cardiac Responder, explained: "We need to transport organs safely and in the shortest possible time and this car is superb. It's extremely reliable and a pleasure to drive.

"The earlier an organ transplant can take place, the better the success rate, so time is crucial. The transfer window for a heart transplant means there's just two hours before the organ becomes unviable. The ŠKODA Superb Estate is knocking time off our journeys and helping us save lives."

The ŠKODA Kodiaq has good ground clearance and a high cabin that provides greater visibility and multi-purpose use – ideal for a number of blue light demands.

West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service have seen the potential of these attributes and have recently took delivery of 30 new Kodiaqs.

The Kodiaq can be specifically designed for canine teams, fitted with driver assistance and safety features that ensure police dogs can travel safely and securely. Its standout features include two air-conditioned kennels equipped with temperature monitoring and special escape hatches for emergency evacuations.

Group Vehicles also have a strong presence in police tactical and specialist roles – and Audi and Volkswagen are key players here.

Volkswagen Golf GTIs have long been the vehicle of choice for tactical operations, while Audi S3s and SQ7s and other more specific models are increasingly being deployed by a variety of specialist teams.

Surrey Police recently took delivery of an Audi S3 for their motorway enforcement team. And a number of VW Amaroks have been acquired by the MOD for their bomb disposal teams.

Steven Cowell adds: "The Volkswagen and Audi models have always had the right spec for the rapid response and tactical teams where meeting very particular demands is crucial.

"It's why the Volkswagen Crafter has been so popular as a police riot van. It has a high payload capacity, can store a lot of equipment and personnel. It's a similar case

with the Amaroks ordered by the MOD. Once adapted they're perfect for the job."

With the COVID-19 crisis placing huge demands on the emergency services, Volkswagen Group loaned vehicles from its blue light fleet, at no cost, to help cover emergency provision. Also, Volkswagen Group has worked alongside approved converters to fulfil new orders to emergency service customers and deliver vehicles earlier than planned.

The levels of service and reliability provided by Volkswagen Group Vehicles is a large part of why Group Vehicles will always be seen as genuine icons for the blue light services.

THE ADVANTAGES OF **BEING ABLE** **TO ADAPT**

HOW LOCKDOWN HAS BROUGHT CHANGE TO INDEPENDENT GARAGES

CURTIS HUTCHINSON REPORTS



As co-host of the weekly Motor Trade Radio podcast, I've been busy since March interviewing industry leaders about the impact that COVID-19 is having on the automotive sector.

Naturally, all agree that it's been the biggest threat the sector has ever faced; certainly eclipsing the financial crisis in 2008. Another common theme has emerged in our conversations though: the current and future role of aftersales.

While this is a given in the independent garage sector, where there's no Plan B, it's been less widely appreciated among franchised dealers where the focus is on selling cars and add-ons, even though it's the workshops that often generate the funds to keep showrooms open and operational. This may well change as a result of the lockdown.

After the financial crisis, franchised dealers saw that there was value in broadening their customer appeal by stocking older used cars as it helped them be more competitive.

This same way of thinking could be applied to aftersales. More proactive sites will be targeting a higher proportion of their local parc by promoting all-marques services to older vehicles, something they've always been able to do but haven't shouted about.

This could lead to increased competition, but lockdown taught the independent garage sector a lot and it has emerged even more resilient.

Although on the 'essential businesses' list, garages that stayed open saw customers granted a six-month extension on MoTs, and non-essential travelling prohibited.

Many rose to the occasion though. Indeed, the spirit of the sector was perhaps best summed up by Allan Knox, co-owner of Knox Brothers in East Kilbride, who moved into his garage so he could continue to take care of the vehicles of staff at the neighbouring hospital.

"We've got doctors and nurses' cars booked in already, so I'll work through those jobs myself," Knox told BBC News at the time.

MoTs may have been on-hold during lockdown but many independents saw high demand for their services. According to Auto Advisor, the garage lead generation specialist, its platform experienced an 88% increase in traffic during the lockdown. It partly attributed this to dealerships being closed bringing more work to independents.

As travel restrictions relaxed, garages with good customer relationships drove business by contacting those who were due an MoT and talking through the potential safety issues of delaying.

Throughout lockdown and the restart, the vital role played by independent garages has been best articulated by Andy Savva, owner of the specialist consultancy The Garage Inspector.

As a passionate 'best practice' advocate, Savva believes independents now have an opportunity to become the workshops of choice for an increasing number of vehicle owners.

"They did an outstanding job staying open when larger organisations remained closed. And they did so to keep our key workers on the roads. They also overcame concerns for their own safety to play a crucial role for the country," he said.

Savva worked closely with owners during and since the lockdown by giving practical advice and words of encouragement, often via his social media channels.

"The impression I got from talking to owners was that they were in uncharted waters. The only comfort I was able to give was that they weren't experiencing this in isolation, their anxieties were shared across society," he said.

For many, the experience has been tough, especially with health and safety concerns and uncertainty over liquidity. However, Savva believes many garages have emerged stronger.

"Changed circumstances have led to them introducing better working practices and hopefully they'll continue into the future."

The challenges presented by the pandemic have become an opportunity for operators to take stock and strengthen their businesses.

The final word goes to Savva. "Coming out of lockdown it's becoming common for garages to be booked up two weeks in advance. Previously that was unheard of in the independent sector. After the initial shock, garage owners have shown courage and leadership that they probably didn't realise they had. The challenge now is to maintain the momentum."

Curtis Hutchinson is a B2B motoring journalist and former editor of Motor Trader and Company Car.



THE MOT TESTING BACKLOG

The six-month MoT exemption ended on 1st August 2020, but the backlog of testing for those exemptions will begin to expire in the Autumn. This is traditionally a busy period as it follows the anniversary of September plate-change registrations.

This year the challenge facing garages will be unprecedented, with the DVSA warning that "Millions more customers will need MoT tests this Autumn – double as many as usual. Demand for tests will peak in October and November, but September and December will also be very busy."

At the end of July the DVSA launched its Beat the Rush campaign urging motorists with exemptions running out in October and November to book their MoTs earlier. However, garage and car owners took to the DVSA website to complain that the campaign had started too late, with lengthy waits for MoTs starting from August.

With MoTs providing a vital customer touchpoint and revenue stream for independents, Andy Savva, owner of The Garage Inspector advises owners to communicate with their customers and consider extending their opening hours in order to meet demand.

COVID-SECURE QUATTRO-TECH

We spoke to **Justin Reason**, Head of Operations at Quattro-Tech, a Cambridgeshire-based independent Volkswagen Group specialist known for exceptional customer service and technical excellence.

When lockdown was first announced, Quattro-Tech quickly implemented best practice COVID-19 secure measures to deliver peace of mind for everyone – and profitability for the business.

“We took the decision to remain open so we could fulfil our obligations to our customers. We consulted with staff to ensure everyone was in agreement about how we could create the safest environment possible. All of which led to us introducing several new measures and processes.”

NEW MEASURES AND PROCESSES.

- Multiple hand-sanitiser stations on-site
- Strict social distancing
- Rigorous cleaning / sanitising schedule – particularly at customer touchpoints
- Sneeze-screens installed
- Customer drop-off appointments – to reduce queueing
- Contactless key drop-off procedures
- Keys cleaned on return / pin pad cleaned before and after use
- Staff PPE (new gloves on every job), washable snoods (replaced daily)
- No test drives or customer lifts from the team.



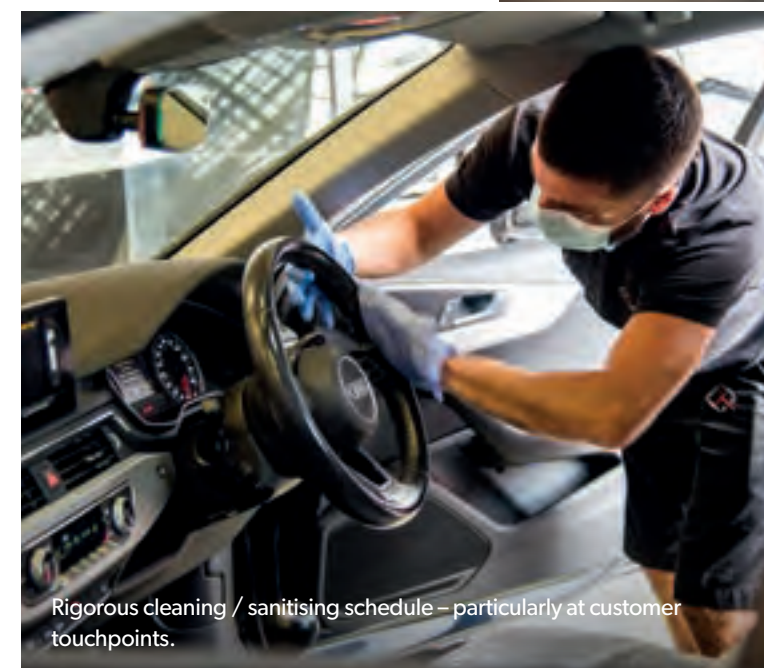
“All of our new measures were communicated to customers via email, blogs and social media. And we used the same channels to provide regular updates on any new measures that we set up.

From April, we also had a small team offering telephone support. Fielding around 20 calls a day, we’ve been answering customer queries and arranging essential repairs.

We’ve had great feedback and it’s played a big part in increasing customer confidence when visiting us on site. For example, we had one customer who drove all the way from Colchester to get his ABS pump repaired because he knew about our COVID-secure measures.



Strict social distancing.



Rigorous cleaning / sanitising schedule – particularly at customer touchpoints.



Sneeze-screens installed.



Contactless key drop-off procedures.

The new normal has also meant taking a fresh look at the business going forward. Customers want to quickly drop-off and pick-up their vehicles so many of the new measures will remain in place.

It’s been a challenging year, but we’ve bounced back. We’ve taken on two new staff and are continuing with our core servicing and repair work, including our commitment to using Volkswagen Genuine Parts.

I think where our business is now has a lot to do with the measures we promptly introduced and how we communicated the changes to staff and customers.

My advice to other businesses regarding the introduction of COVID-secure measures is to not view it as a hassle but to think of it as an opportunity to move forward.”

LOCKDOWN LIVES

Three personal takes on pre- and post-lockdown life



Andy Oldknow, works as the Sales Manager at TPS Derby. We chat to him about how a difficult decision made during lockdown has proved rewarding, both on a personal and professional level.

Tell us about your lockdown experience and how you coped with it?

During lockdown I made the tough decision to spend eleven weeks away from home. My partner works in a care home that had locked down early and put very strict procedures in place to prevent the spread of the virus, so it was the best way to minimise the risk.

It was the right choice, as so far no cases have occurred at my partner's care home. Another big positive for us personally, was after 15 years together we are finally going to get married next year.

At TPS Derby, everyone worked throughout lockdown and the attitude was great. We were all one big team doing everything we could to keep people moving during unprecedented times. It was a spirit shared by our customers and it has helped everyone become closer and stronger than ever before.

What are you doing to keep your staff and customers safe during the current crisis?

Like every other TPS Centre, we have made all our sales contact-free, orders are prepaid on card for delivery or collection, and collections are arranged on an appointment basis.

We have converted more customers onto credit accounts and all staff use PPE when required.

There are also one-way systems now throughout the building, including the canteen, and social distancing is always observed.

As we emerge from the lockdown, how is business and what is TPS doing to help support customers?

Since lockdown we are consistently moving forward week-on-week, month-on-month. Our customers are still cautious and are not spending at the levels they would normally, but overall confidence is gradually returning.

The service and support provided during lockdown has been second to none, and as a result we have gained new customers, which has been a boost to the business.

What needs to happen for garages and the aftermarket sector to enjoy a full recovery?

TPS has remained a constant throughout for all our customers. I am sure we have built stronger relationships with our existing customer base, and got less frequent spenders buying more from us.

A full recovery is showing signs of happening and we remain committed to keeping the momentum up for our customers.



Adrian Browne is Managing Director of the Thrumpton Motor Company, based in Retford, Nottinghamshire. We chatted to Adrian about life during lockdown, keeping staff and customers safe and the road to business recovery.

Tell us about your lockdown experience and how you coped with it?

It was very hard not being able to visit family and with my wife being a nurse, it was also very stressful. Within the business, we initially furloughed staff but gradually brought them back to work in May.

We have followed Government guidelines throughout and despite the restrictions, we have been very fortunate in not having to make any redundancies within the team.

What are you doing to keep your staff and customers safe during the current crisis?

We have hand sanitiser stations on-site, signage in place as per government guidelines, and social distancing implemented throughout the business.

The staff always wear gloves, which are changed for each job. We also have disposable seat covers and steering wheel covers used for each separate vehicle we work on.

As we emerge from the lockdown, how is business and what is TPS doing to help support customers?

We have found that customer confidence is returning and business is gradually getting back to last year's levels, with July and August being particularly busy. We have received a good service throughout from TPS and it has helped us a lot in getting customers' cars back on the road.

What needs to happen for garages and the aftermarket sector to enjoy a full recovery?

We need to ensure all staff and customers are continually kept safe, and extremely high levels of sanitisation are key to this when carrying out our duties. It's an important part of maintaining the excellent levels of service we are known for.



TPS Hereford's Van Driver team - **Adam Belton**, **Bev Maxwell** and **Sue Steele** – have been consistently delivering for customers and colleagues during the COVID-19 crisis. They talk about their lockdown experiences and how they are literally helping to drive the recovery.

Tell us about your lockdown experience and how you coped with it?

Adam: I was asked to stay at work to help keep the business running the best we could for our customers. I was unsure at first, given the potential risks involved.

However, I was soon reassured as we were provided with everything we needed to keep ourselves protected. The Centre Manager would regularly check we had enough equipment and if we didn't, would source what we required.

What are you doing to keep your staff and customers safe during the current crisis?

Bev: For staff, we are making sure face masks are worn, social distancing is adhered to and PPE is worn where necessary.

For customers, this includes wearing face masks where appropriate, social distancing and checking they are happy for us to enter their premises on arrival.

As we emerge from the lockdown, how is business and what is TPS doing to help support customers?

Sue: Business is certainly starting to pick back up again, with people starting to feel more

confident in going back to work and taking their cars back to their garage.

Adam: During lockdown we dealt with a lot of customers who we don't normally see day to day. The word was getting around we were providing the best service out there and it certainly helped drive customers to us.

Business has started to level off a bit more now in terms of new customers, but our 'normal' customers are coming back stronger and more organised, so everything overall is getting a lot better.

What needs to happen for garages and the aftermarket sector to enjoy a full recovery?

Bev: We are already seeing an increase in business over the last few weeks, which is a good sign for the future. What we need to avoid is any further lockdowns where possible, so that the positive effects we are experiencing now are not reversed again.

THANK YOU TPS

A few words to celebrate TPS staff and their commitment to customers during lockdown.

"ALWAYS RELIABLE"

"ALWAYS HELPFUL AND VERY PROMPT WITH PARTS, SERVICE AND DELIVERY. THANKS"

"VERY EFFICIENT"

"THANK YOU TPS FOR NOT CLOSING DURING THE LOCKDOWN PERIOD"

"IT'S ALWAYS A SERVICE WITH A SMILE!"

"WOULD NOT HESITATE TO USE AGAIN"

"THE SERVICE IS ALWAYS PROFESSIONAL"

"THEY OFFER A GOOD RELIABLE SPEEDY SERVICE"

"ALL GOOD. HAPPY YOU ARE BACK IN ACTION AND MAKING DELIVERIES"

"VERY HELPFUL ON PHONES AND DELIVERY DRIVERS"

"KEEP UP THE GREAT WORK. AND THANK YOU FOR ALL YOUR EFFORTS FOR ME AND MY CUSTOMERS"

"WELL DONE FOR CARRYING ON"

"PERFECT. 100% EASY TO DEAL WITH. I WILL BE USING THEM LOTS IN THE FUTURE ON THE STRENGTH OF THEIR FRIENDLINESS ALONE!"

"ALWAYS WILLING TO HELP"

"ALWAYS GOOD ON THE PHONES. ALWAYS A VERY HIGH STANDARD OF SERVICE"

"KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK, 5 STARS"

*CSAT Customer survey feedback 2020.



**for Volkswagen Group
Genuine Parts**