

High flyer

With the introduction of Iveco's Daily 4x4 in right-hand drive guise, Steve Banner puts this serious new off-road truck to the test on Millbrook's most challenging circuits

If you are fixing pylons in isolated fields some distance from the road, or repairing deep drainage ditches way out in East Anglia's windy fens, you will need a vehicle offering decent off-road performance that's also capable of carrying serious equipment. If a 4x4 pick-up has insufficient payload capacity, or a low-rise 4x4 van can't cut the ground clearance – and your pockets aren't deep enough for a Mercedes-Benz Unimog – then Iveco may now have the solution.

Its latest Daily has now been launched as a right-hand-drive 4x4 chassis cab and crew cab at either 3.5 or 5.5 tonnes. Four-wheel-drive is permanently engaged and a transfer box gives you access to no fewer than 24 high- and low-ratio and crawler gears, with the first six high-ratio ratios available for on-road driving. Additionally, centre, front and rear differential locks come as standard, while



the transfer box and gearbox offer a variety of power take-off options.

When fully-laden, the Daily 4x4's front and rear ground clearance is 255mm. What's more, wading depth is 660mm. Beyond that, two wheelbases are listed – 3,050mm or 3,400mm – although the crew cab is not marketed with the shorter wheelbase.

BUILT FOR THE TASK

Three-leaf parabolic suspension is fitted at the front with four-leaf parabolic suspension helping to support the back, and Daily 4x4 comes with a reinforced chassis frame. It also sports a three-piece steel front bumper – which means that if one of the sections comes to grief, there is no need to replace the bumper in its entirety.

Beneath the bonnet you will find a Euro 6, AdBlue-reliant, 3.0-litre diesel producing 170bhp over a 3,000–3,500 rpm plateau. And maximum torque of 400Nm bites steadily across a, usefully-wide, 1,250–3,000 rpm plateau.

I got to grips with a 3,050mm-wheelbase 5.5-tonne 55S17W single-cab fitted with a Scattolini dropside body containing a 1,000kg test load. Sitting behind the wheel, I took a deep breath prior to tackling the challenging off-road course at Bedfordshire's Millbrook Proving Ground. Time to contemplate a few key facts and figures.

This vehicle can tackle a maximum gradient of 45 degrees with an off-road approach angle of 48 degrees, a departure angle of 41 degrees and a break-over angle of 149 degrees. Meanwhile, maximum recommended body length is 2,750mm with a top recommended width of 2,300mm. Maximum body/payload allowance is 2,985kg and the 5.5-tonner can haul a



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slippery concrete banks at either end, then dropped down into what looked rather like a canal lock minus the gates, but containing plenty of cold, muddy water. Daily 4x4 trundled down the concrete incline, through the water and up the incline on the other side without showing the least hesitation. And at no point during this exercise did I resort to the push-button diff locks. The only button I pressed was the engine fan disabler before Daily took to the waves.

In dealing with these challenges it is interesting to note that Daily was shod with ordinary on/off-road tyres. A bit more engine retardation would have been useful during one or two of the steeper descents, but I reached the bottom without mishap. Then I reverted to the first six high-ratio gears when I swung back on to Millbrook’s on-road courses, including its hill route.

FIRM BUT FAST

On surfaced highways Daily delivers an extremely firm ride, although the driver is isolated from its worst effects by a mechanically-suspended seat. Over-enthusiastic cornering is unwise given the little truck’s high centre of gravity – and the unavoidably wide turning circle of 13.2 metres wall-to-wall, falling to 12.2 metres kerb-to-kerb, means you have to think before you execute tight manoeuvres.

On the plus side, Daily 4x4 pulls strongly up inclines and feels as though it could haul a fully-laden trailer up a vertical cliff face without worrying too much. And, while it is never going to be the fastest truck on the M6, it has enough performance on tap to

enable it to keep up with the traffic.

All this capability does not come cheap. The Daily 4x4 I drove will set you back £68,300, including the body. If that is likely to make the accounts department turn pale, then you may care to point out that it is considerably cheaper than a Unimog. Order one of those and you could end up with a bill for at least £80,000. And that is for a cooking, no-frills, entry-level model.

Is the latter more capable than the Daily 4x4? Undoubtedly. But most customers do not need all the features it offers (you can buy a road/rail Unimog that can shunt a 1,000-tonne goods train). Even the Daily 4x4 may be over-egging the pudding if all you need to do is shift heavy, bulky equipment up a muddy farm track or across a waterlogged meadow. In either of those cases you may be better advised to opt for a low-rise 4x4 version of the Mercedes-Benz Sprinter or Ford Transit.

Worth a look, too, is the Oberaigner selectable 4x4 conversion offered by Vauxhall on the Movano. Sold in both van and chassis cab guises, this has low-ratio gears, increased ground clearance (65mm at the front and 45–58mm rear, depending on model) and a locking rear diff. And Renault, too, will be introducing a line-up of four-wheel-drive vans and chassis cabs during Q2 this year.

Nevertheless, with the launch of Daily 4x4, Iveco is exploiting its own niche, with a truck that is considerably more capable than 4x4 pick-ups and low-rise 4x4 vans. Are we talking about a Unimog for the budget-conscious? No doubt about it – and one that looks as though it might just be a cost-effective investment. **TE**



braked trailer grossing at up to 3.5 tonnes.

Iveco has made ample use of its Daily parts bin to contain costs. The dashboard, for instance, looks much the same as the mainstream model’s aside from the buttons for the diff locks plus a switch that turns off the engine fan to prevent damage when fording deep water. That said, a comparatively-high driving position means all-round vision is exemplary. Approach the crest of a hill and there is a good chance you will see beyond before you commit yourself.

Having deployed the relevant lever to drop down to a lower set of ratios, I tackled most of the course in either 13th or 14th. Steep, muddy ascents and descents held no terrors for the 4x4 Daily and it was just as happy on equally acute slopes covered with sand. It tramped across transverse concrete ridges without missing a beat, then rumbled along a length of concrete canted over at an angle of 25 degrees.

The machine forded a lake with