



# Quality street

Scania's new R and S series trucks have certainly created a deal of interest in the industry, but their arrival in the UK will be a slow-burn affair. Ian Norwell reports

Although first examples of its new tractor units hit UK roads early in December last year, Scania's new R and S series look likely to coexist with the outgoing models for an extended period. Indeed, production of the latter is not expected to cease until the first quarter of 2018 as Scania copes with demand from its international markets.

"The ramp-up is spread over time, as the various facilities begin working on the new models, which at the moment are only produced in Sweden," comments Scania's UK sales director Andrew Jamieson. "In the UK, we don't have a fixed allocation, but we could expect new model volumes to be no more than 115 per month in the first half of this year, increasing thereafter."

That's less than a third of its 2015 average monthly output. And with the Swede's current model still making up the majority of sales next year, Scania seems relaxed, citing commitments to supply the current specification to a range of customers, certainly into early 2018.

So what's new? I took the opportunity to drive a couple of right-hand-drive models at the Bedford Autodrome, and discuss Scania's new

approach to specifications with its sales and technical team. Initial observations: the driving sessions in a S580 6x2/2 and a R500 6x2/4 demonstrated a new benchmark in noise levels and handling. In a competitive field, the attention to quality detail here is simply exceptional.

Too many to render here, but as an example, the location of the rotary switch for headlights is now in the driver's door capping. It's IP (ingress protection) rated to prevent problems with rain. But the result, here and elsewhere, is controls that would be just as at home in a high-end passenger car.

## SPEC SAVERS

Away from the exotic, though, I was most interested in what uplift, if any, fleet drivers might see. And the answer is that the concept of 'fleet spec' has been revisited, meaning that for Scania it's now somewhat of a misnomer. "There is no prescriptive spec anymore," insists Scania technical manager Phil Rootham. "Naturally, there is a starting specification, but the route to the final spec will be driven by the customer and the duty cycle."

The order process will thus inevitably be detailed, but a tablet-driven process for dealer sales staff seems

to capture the increased choices and sophistication without adding a layer of confusion.

And when the driver finally gets behind the wheel, there will be a free handover app to digest. Scania says it's this level of detail that will enable the full tailoring of each truck to the job it's designed to perform. The old back of fag packet stuff has been consigned even further to history.

But no matter how cheese-paring a fleet manager may be, any final spec of this truck family cannot escape its improved foundations. The detail is everywhere, from branded illuminated door exit lights, to the door closure that exudes engineering precision. Incidentally, that exterior sun visor has been struck off the options list, saving fuel and cutting noise by a healthy 1dB.

Yes, fleet managers will admire it - and so will the proportion of the 100,000-odd new drivers needed in the UK by 2020 who end up in one. Traditionalists will like touches such as the conventional handbrake. Let's hope they get the message on smooth and slippery, wind-cheating surfaces, and refrain from bolting spotlights atop the cab. If they can't resist, there'll be an aerodynamicist in Södertälje who will be silently weeping. 