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Alternative fuels finally moving mainstream?

Just over six weeks until the CV Show (25–27 April 2017) opens its doors at the NEC, Birmingham, and it's shaping up to be another unmissable industry event – particularly with the return of major truck manufacturers DAF, MAN and Iveco (p17).

The big boys' timing couldn't be better. It's not only about the obvious attraction of large, high-tech trucks in all their glorious diversity. Nor is it just about their promise of new packages and services designed to increase operators' efficiency and profitability. Their arrival at the CV Show also coincides with the start of a new era, as alternative fuels move beyond niche and into mainstream vehicles.

So, yes, DAF will be highlighting DAF Transport Efficiency, with the power of its predictive cruise control, silent mode and support services to improve operations. And, yes, MAN will use the show as the UK launchpad for its foray into the world of large vans at 3–5.5 tonnes, taking on Iveco and its increasingly popular Daily.

But every bit as important, the latter will be talking about its game-changing Stralis NP (natural power), the first dedicated LNG (liquefied natural gas) tractor unit to offer a full 400bhp and 1,700Nm of torque – and driving through an AMT. This is heartland haulage stuff, finally putting gas firmly in the frame. And not only without any of the earlier compromises, but also with the guarantee of solid savings well within two years, depending on mileage (p12 and p27).

We live in interesting times. But there's more. Other fuels on the ascendant include hydrogen and hybrid LPG (liquefied petroleum gas), with projects funded under the government's £20 million Low Emission Freight and Logistics Trial. Expect to see everything from hydrogen-enabled van and truck drivetrains to hydrogen dual-fuel conversions and the world's first hybrid LPG-KERS tankers.

Alternative fuels are now closer than ever to coming of age.

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