

# Well crafted

With new chassis cabs and variants, Volkswagen has completed the line-up of its Crafter light commercial range launched at this year's CV Show. Dan Gilkes reviews it

As both panel van and chassis cab, Volkswagen's Crafter is very well-built, with tight panel gaps and an interior that really does feel hewn from solid. And the cab is a good place to spend the day, featuring comfortable seating, plenty of storage and a good view of the road ahead through what must be one of the biggest windscreens in an LCV. (The Crafter is also the basis of the TGE from MAN, Volkswagen Group's corporate sister: see Brian Weatherley's review here: <https://is.gd/otiqum>.)

Volkswagen's 2.0-litre diesel engine provides plenty of power, even in its smallest 100bhp guise (300Nm torque), though most buyers will opt for the 120bhp in rear-wheel drive (also 300Nm torque) or the 138bhp engine (340Nm) for either front- or 4Motion all-wheel drive models. For hauling, the 175bhp engine delivers a hefty punch with the pulling power (410Nm) to move fully laden with ease.

It would take a very sensitive driver to tell the difference between front- or rear-wheel drive van in normal use, so similar are they to drive. Of course, rear-wheel drive will come into its own for frequent towing, while all-wheel drive will prove useful for those that regularly have to keep moving off-road or in particularly poor weather conditions.

The six-speed manual gearbox is slick and easy to use, with the gear lever mounted right beside the steering wheel. If a £1,650 premium can be

justified, the eight-speed ZF automatic transmission is excellent, smoothly swapping ratios and leaving the driver free to concentrate on the road.

## OVERVIEW OF THE RANGE

In total, Volkswagen will offer European buyers 69 derivatives of panel van and chassis cab in three drivelines. UK customers will get a slightly smaller range, which includes front-wheel drive models at 3.0 and 3.5 tonnes gvw, rear-wheel drive Crafters at 3.5 and 5.0 tonnes, and all-wheel drive models at 3.5 tonnes only. Rear-wheel drive models will rise to 5.5 tonnes gvw.

All drivelines use the Volkswagen turbodiesel engine, mounted transversely in front-wheel and all-wheel drive models, or longitudinally in rear-wheel driven vans. The 4Motion all-wheel drive models use a Haldex clutch to bring the rear axle into play if the front wheels lose traction.

Front-wheel drive 3-tonne vans get the 100bhp and 174.5bhp engines, with a six-speed manual gearbox. The more popular 3.5-tonne models get all but the 120bhp engine, with an option on the two higher-horsepower models for the ZF transmission.

Rear-wheel drive Crafters can be had with the two larger engines at 3.5 tonnes, with the six-speed manual



gearbox as standard. At 5.0 tonnes, buyers can choose the 120bhp or 174.5bhp engines, again with the manual gearbox, though the big engine can also be specified with the auto transmission (but neither this model nor the 138bhp will be available until after June 2018).

Finally, the 4Motion all-wheel drive vans are available with a choice of 138bhp with a manual gearbox, or the 174.5bhp engine with manual or auto transmission (again, that latter model won't be available until mid-2018).

Chassis cabs are offered at 3.5 tonnes and 5.0 tonnes gvw. In front-wheel drive they weigh in at 3.5 tonnes only, and include again options for all of the engines except the 120bhp unit. Likewise, the two most powerful versions are offered with a choice of transmission. Rear-wheel drive trucks are offered at 3.5 tonnes with 138bhp or 174.5bhp, with manual gearbox only. At 5.0 tonnes you can have 120bhp and a manual box, or 174.5bhp with a choice of transmission. The all-wheel drive chassis cab is offered at 3.5 tonnes only, with 138bhp and a manual box or 174.5bhp and a choice of transmission.

For chassis cabs, VW has created a



standard, that includes City Emergency Braking, Driver Alert, Crosswind Assist on panel vans, Adaptive Cruise Control on higher-trim models and Post Collision Braking. Optional systems include Lane Assist and a sensor-based side protection system, along with Park Assist and Trailer Assist.

Trailer Assist is particularly impressive for those towing regularly, making it much easier to line the van and trailer up when reversing, and even allowing the driver to steer the van using the door mirror joystick while leaning out of the window.

Crafter vans will be offered in the familiar Startline, Trendline and Highline trim levels, with chassis cabs initially only available in the Startline trim.

Volkswagen says that all standard telematics solutions can be integrated into Crafter using a fleet management interface. The company will also offer its own ConnectedVan mobile fleet management system. This uses a DataPlug module that reads vehicle data via the van's diagnostic interface, transmitted by Bluetooth to a smartphone app. Drivers and fleet managers can use the app as a logbook to retain fuel records and other data. **TE**

specialist bodybuilding centre within its new Crafter plant in Poland (see also pp26-27). However, the company's UK arm will also offer a range of approved bodies from UK converters, where they are better suited to UK operation.

### MARKET EXPECTATIONS

Volkswagen is expecting around half of buyers to go for the front-wheel drive models, with about a third taking rear-wheel drive and the rest 4Motion.

On rear-wheel drive vans and chassis cabs, the 3.5-tonne models come with single rear wheels, while 5.0-tonners have double rear wheels. A super single rear tyre will be offered on the 5.0-tonne panel van by the end of next year.

It is worth noting that a rear-wheel drive van loses around 100kg of payload to its front-wheel drive cousin, and that the all-wheel drive models are up to 150kg heavier than front-wheel drives. In addition, front-wheel drive vans have a load floor that is 100mm lower than rear-wheel drive vans, providing easier access.

Crafter bodies are available in three lengths, on two wheelbases (3,640mm and 4,490mm) and with three roof heights. The smallest van is 9.3m<sup>3</sup> internally, with the largest van body providing a load volume of 18.4m<sup>3</sup> and a maximum cargo height of 2,196mm. All

van bodies have a full-height bulkhead as standard, and Crafter can be equipped with a flexible internal roof rack. The vans are also pre-drilled for installing many types of racking and shelving.

Crafter chassis cabs come on the same wheelbases as the vans; both versions can be supplied with either a single or double (crew) cab.

All Crafter models have electromechanical steering, which contributes to reduced fuel consumption but also allows for the integration of a number of driver assistance systems. As

