



Renault Trucks has launched a 6.0-tonne Master 6x2 as an alternative to the default 7.5-tonne truck. As van chassis are becoming ever heavier - as emissions compliance tightens and specifications improve - the popular 3.5-tonne van's payload is under increasing pressure, reports Dan Gilkes

There are several 4.5- and 5.0-tonne vans available, including Renault's own Master, while IVECO will sell you a Daily with gross weights of up to 7.2 tonnes gvw. With the Master 6x2, Renault Trucks is looking to maximise payload and load volumes, while retaining that van outline.

The chassis is produced by Dutch converter Nefra Vehicle Technology, using the front-wheel drive Master as a base. This allows Nefra to offer a low-floor design, with a choice of standard or wide-track rear axles to provide maximum space between the wheel arches. The rear axles can be steel or air-suspended, with the majority of European buyers opting for air.

Equipped with a 30m<sup>3</sup> PD Stevens box body and integral tail-lift, the Master 6x2 offers a payload of 2,995kg. A similarly equipped 7.5-tonne Renault Midlum has a payload of around 2,500kg. The majority of Master customers probably won't require a tail-lift either, boosting payload further.

Even those that do opt for the tail-lift should see a productivity gain.



Accessing the rear (pictured above) to pick a parcel took 40 seconds in the Master and almost two minutes for the truck, with the lift having to travel much higher to reach the body floor.

There are also safety benefits, as there is less chance of injury from a fall from height with the low-floor design. Plus, the PD Stevens body has side-loading doors, allowing safe kerb access.

Multi-drop drivers will also appreciate the ease with which they can get into and out of the cab, rather than having to climb into a truck driver's seat after every delivery. Less easy to quantify, but

equally important for some companies, is the fact that a van-shaped vehicle can be far more acceptable in a residential delivery situation than a truck.

There are financial savings, too, particularly at the fuel pump. Over a 100-mile test route through the Cotswolds, with a similar half-load on each vehicle, the 7.5-tonne Midlum returned 17.5mpg. The Master 6x2 managed 27.0mpg. Taken over a 30,000-mile year, with a gallon of diesel currently costing around £5.85, that equates to a saving of more than 600 gallons, or £3,516. Over five years, that's more than £17,500 in fuel savings alone. Added to that, the repair and maintenance costs of the Master should be lower than those of the truck.

The Master 6x2 is powered by a twin-turbo 2.3-litre Renault engine offering 163bhp. This drives through a six-speed manual gearbox to the front wheels. The van delivers an easy driving experience, with plenty of power to keep up with traffic in town and on the motorway.

While Renault Trucks is not expecting the Master 6x2 to be a huge seller, it successfully bridges the gap from the small van to the truck sector. [TE](#)