



ONE-STOP SHOP

The benefit of the ATF was to create a one-stop shop, says John Lewis, MOT operations manager. "We were using a third party for 35-40 tests per month, and to reduce time and costs for us, it seemed like the natural next step." Now if the garage carries out a service on a Friday, the vehicle will be put in for test on a Monday (the lane, limited by DVSA vehicle examiner shortages, is only open one day a week).

In addition to the ATF services, it also uses the lane to offer MOTs for cars (Class 4), mini-coaches (Class 5) and light commercial vehicles (Class 7). Lewis describes the MOT offering as a 'plan B' originally implemented because of uncertainty about the ATF application moratorium.

He explains: "That wasn't the original approach we were looking at, but we wanted to find a way to recoup our outlay. The MOT facility wouldn't cost any more than a bit of training. We have our own fleet of company vehicles and vans, and there are also staff vehicles. We also have Class 5 operators coming for repairs. We don't do light vehicle repairs unless customers can't." In addition, he points out that some Class 4 vehicles can't be tested at normal sites, such as large motorhomes. (An informal relationship with a nearby MOT centre sends the larger vehicles to J&M.)

Established in 1991 by a father and

Independent commercial vehicle workshop J&M Morgan Engineering won approval for an ATF lane at its Lancashire workshop only months after DVSA lifted the moratorium on new licences.

Will Dalrymple reports

son team, J&M Morgan moved to the site, then equipped with a two-bay workshop with two pits, in 2007. It then received planning permission for an additional three-bay building with a single pit mounted in the middle. To make the ATF, the end bay was fenced off and converted by VLT Test Systems. It features a new pit and a VLT brake tester, which is backed up by an existing brake tester used for tachograph calibration.

As an independent, the workshop is not formally affiliated with any HGV or PSV brands, although it is a WABCO service partner. Lewis describes the operation: "We're a heavy vehicle service maintenance operator and repairer. We offer tachograph calibration, a tachograph bay, MOT testing for Class 4,5 and 7 vehicles, tests for PSVs and HGVs, a diagnostics bay and four-wheel laser alignment. For 16 staff, that's a large operation." It also stocks parts on site and holds impress stock for some suppliers.

Four staff are apprentices, training at either Preston or St Helens College. Adds Lewis: "When they go to college, they compare what they do with the others, and it's vast. They are working on a different vehicle every day: different specification, different type."

He continues: "One apprentice is currently assisting with an engine refit in a battle bus; it's an old military truck that goes to parties offering paintball." Lewis admits that the workshop does pass on to specialists bodywork, air conditioning, tail-lifts and gearboxes (the latter because of the cost implications and the time involved). "Otherwise, the guys will turn their hand to anything; they are constantly learning and passing on experiences to apprentices." All but two technicians are accredited to irtec inspection technician level, and Lewis says he is weighing up applying to become an irtec assessment centre, if it can tap into demand in the neighbourhood of the garage. It is also considering applying for government grants to upskill some of the technicians to Level 3 from Level 2.

One of the apprentices is gearing up to take his end-point assessment. Asked what he will do once he qualifies, Lewis concludes: "Our apprentice will stay, what with the increased business. We have gained some maintenance contracts from the ATF lane." **TE**