



Having launched its Euro 6 XF tractors last year, DAF has completed the job with the CF and LF ranges. With Euro 6 emissions compliance now just weeks away, Ian Norwell reports from the Ardennes

Solid performance

DAF was certainly not the first to market with Euro 6 engines. With some other manufacturers getting compliant vehicles on the road in Europe two years ago, they've been able to use the intervening time to refine their products. Nevertheless, the XF tractor approached Euro 6 and the model replacement question with pragmatism, using DAF's existing body-in-white cab foundations and spending the money on drivetrains and chassis instead.

With the CF and LF ranges, DAF has taken the same approach. That's not to say the cabs are dated. Large grilles to facilitate the extra cooling requirements of its Euro 6 engines have partly forced a new look. Also, new interiors and reworked exterior panels give drivers plenty to be pleased about. And fleet managers can be confident, too, because the big changes are under the cab floor.

Meanwhile, in-cab storage for drivers is good, and a DAF phone can now be specified, which is embedded in the dashboard and only requires a SIM card. Controlled from the steering wheel, this means guaranteed hands-free communication, separated from personal mobiles.

Between the rails

Euro 6 has brought its packaging issues for truck makers, mainly with large after-treatment boxes to accommodate along the chassis rails. The lighter range of CF and LF rigids has given DAF more latitude with naturally longer chassis, but there is also a range of options for the CF tractor, whether you're running two- or three-axle fleets.

The SCR (selective catalytic reduction) equipment, DPF (diesel particulate filter), batteries and the tanks for fuel, air and AdBlue can all be moved around the

chassis, according to axle and fuel needs. This flexibility is worth fleet engineers' time exploring, if you want to optimise layout: there's bound to be a sweet spot hiding in there somewhere.

For engines, the technology seen in the 12.9-litre MX-13 last year has trickled down into the 10.8-litre MX-11, and both engines are found in the XF long-haul and CF heavy-duty, medium radius distribution chassis. The CF also gets the new 6.7-litre PX-7, which gives it the biggest choice of power outputs in the revised DAF stable. But the LF has quite a reach, too: using the PX-7 and the new 4.5-litre PX-5, it manages to cover the spread from a 7.5-tonne rigid to a 28-tonne light tractor.

For Raoul Wijnands, project manager for testing on the new trucks, this is the end of the road for emissions-busting. Agreeing with many in the industry, he says: "Euro 6 is the end of possible reductions [in



emissions]. Any further would be senseless.” But, he’s excluding cuts in CO₂, because that’s firmly welded to the never-ending search for fuel economy.

Nevertheless, the focus of that search is now moving down the drivetrain, with transmissions now stepping up to play a more important part. It’s inevitably a team effort between engine, gearbox, telematics and the driver. The tools and the data are now there for fleet engineers as never before.

That said, as ever, DAF’s standard spec is a manual gearbox, be it in an XF tractor (where 80% of buyers go for the ZF AS-Tronic), or an LF 7.5-tonner. However, all the CF and LF test vehicles I drove had AMTs (automated manual transmissions), except for a Royal Mail Spec 150bhp, LF 7.5 tonne box.

I assume that such a vehicle is bought on price, and it would be arrogant to criticise a buyer who has to deal in such volumes, but I do feel that a handful of the latest AMTs would be worth a try in what must be one of the hardest-working trucks on the road. Mine was a lovely, quiet little truck, with a five-speed manual box and a rudimentary engine brake to work with. I didn’t, however, have a clipboard burning a hole in the dashboard and the pressure of urban clutter to deal with – inanimate or otherwise.

DAF LF on profile: in-cab storage for drivers is good, and a DAF phone can now be specified, which is embedded in the dashboard



This should be the new homeland of the AMT, where it can certainly deliver driver benefits, and economic ones, too. Clever transmission additions, such as ACC (adaptive cruise control), work very well on the CF440 4x2 tractor I drove. There’s no PPC (predictive powertrain control) available, but I would hope to see that arrive here before too long. Initially seen by some as technology for its own sake, I have driven test routes in Europe where PPC decisively delivered a 9.6% fuel advantage. It’s true that a gain of this magnitude is only realised on long-haul, but it’s a massive figure and PPC-equipped trucks are being ordered in volume, where available.

Incremental gains

But it’s not only about the transmission. Winning small, sometimes minute advantages at every turn, has become the fleet engineer’s mantra, and DAF ticks all the boxes. Lighter (assembled) camshafts; common rail injection; CGI (compacted graphite iron) blocks and heads, for strength; fuel pumps integrated into the block; two-speed water pumps, double thermostats; fast-shift between the top two gears; Eco-Roll; and fan engagement reduced. All shave off pennies that add up to pounds.

The CF also has new axles, with lower oil capacities (higher quality) to reduce churning losses. Together with new stabilink rear suspension, which combines anti-roll bar and reaction rods, these have cut a claimed 100kg off the gvw.

Meanwhile, the DPA (driver performance assistant) offers rather more than an incremental gain. This coaching system is clear, supportive and non-adversarial. If a fleet manager gets the right driver trainer, there’s gold in ‘them thar drivers’. With the right attitude, a driver will seek out high percentage scores on braking, anticipation and economy. And canny fleet managers will see that a small percentage of the savings they make end up as a fuel bonus.

DPA is also good at getting drivers to make full use of the auxiliary braking. Pedantic deployment of the three-stage control stalk that engages the interarder (£2,000 option) and then the MX engine brake (standard), generates a 100% score. Everybody wins, except friction material salespeople.

This driver behaviour aid is not part of a telematics system: it is in-cab only, and can be zeroed at shift end. It’s a good introduction to performance evaluation for drivers unfamiliar with, or resistant to, the idea. That said, a full telematics pack will more than repay its cost. And, although DAF does not have its own telematics offering, there is plenty of choice in the aftermarket. Best advice is to keep it simple.

In a nutshell, DAF has made a good job of upgrading a pair of popular trucks – spending its investment money where it will have an effect on the fleet manager’s bottom line. It may not have the glitz of some other newcomers but, clearly, DAF is sticking with a successful formula. **TE**