



Free side view camera



with every reversing camera

Free front parking sensors



when you take reversing sensors

Free heated electric mirrors



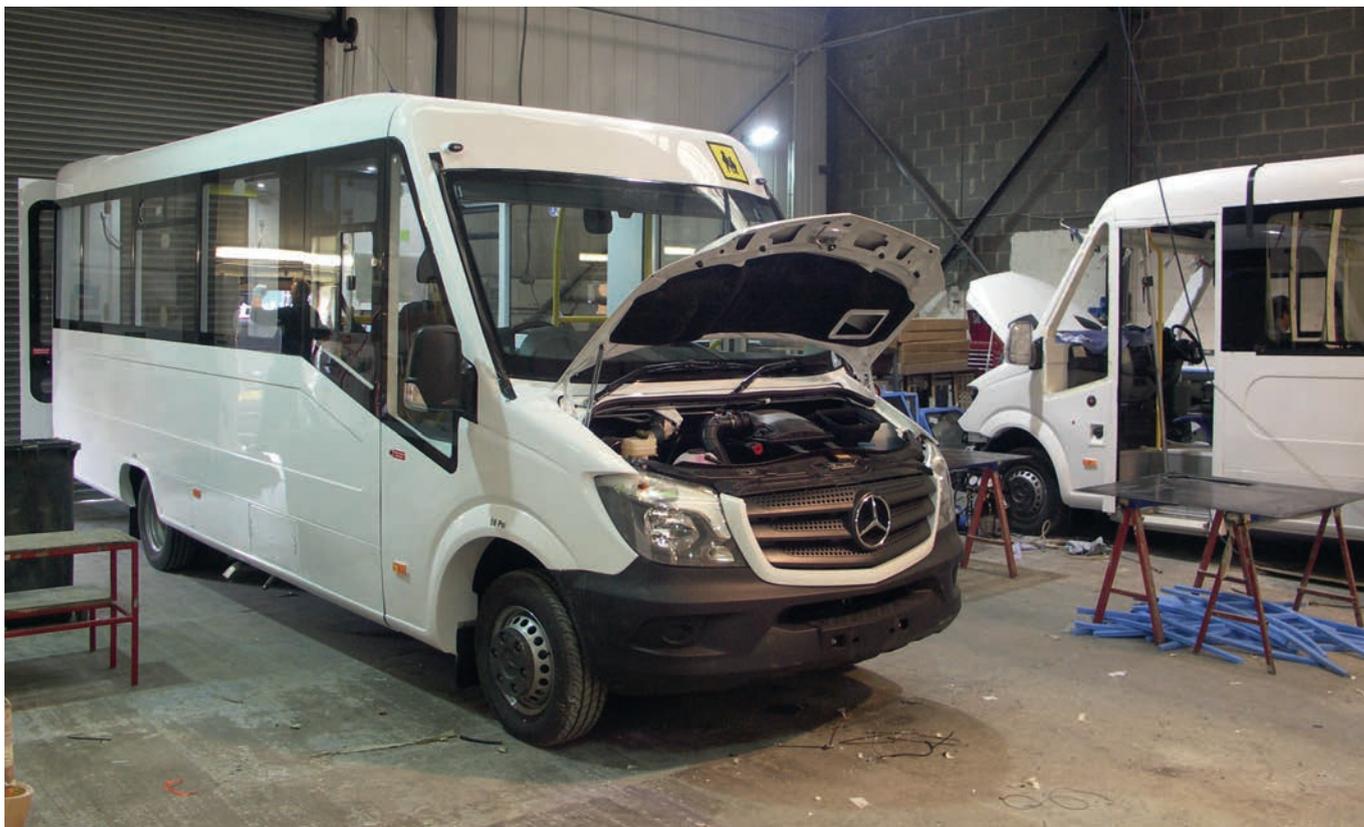
on every vehicle from Treka Bus

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Treka is building seven minibuses a week at the moment, but that has potential to increase if future demand for vehicles dictates

# Treka aims to raise the bar high in 2017

Nobody in the minibus industry is expecting an easy ride in 2017, but a policy of continuous improvements and reacting to the demands of the market will deliver the greatest degree of certainty. That's what Treka Bus has in store as it contemplates another prosperous year

One thing is for sure: The year ahead is not going to be an average one. It's shaping up to be just the opposite, creating a challenging time for those in the minibus business regardless of whether they are operators, suppliers or vehicle manufacturers.

In the latter category, Treka Bus is doing its bit to calm things by giving buyers pricing certainty on its coachbuilt and converted minibuses in 2017. It is also reinvesting cost savings achieved via a programme of continual improvement back into its products by offering an enhanced vehicle specification at no additional cost.

"Quotations issued during 2017 will be valid until the end of the year, regardless of what happens with exchange rates and component costs in the meantime," says Sales Director Helen Day.

"A buyer could receive a quote from

us now and come back on 31 December. There will be no quibble and no question. We are doing this to give the marketplace a solid option that it can rely on and we are shackling ourselves to a promise."

## Constant improvement

Treka's commitment to pricing stability is backed up by the enhancements to specifications across its minibus range, which is built on Mercedes-Benz Sprinter and Volkswagen Crafter base vehicles.

One of the added value elements relates to parking sensors. If the buyer selects rear sensors then it will also get those at the front for no charge, while electrically adjusted and heated mirrors are now a zero cost option on every vehicle.

**“Quotations issued in 2017 will be valid until the end of the year, regardless of the exchange rate”**

The final benefit is for buyers who select a reversing camera. On minibuses that are specified with this safety aid, a waist-level nearside rear-view camera will be added at no cost. When the left indicator is applied, it gives the driver a clear view of this important area via a dash monitor.

"We have seen growing demand for a nearside camera, but we realise that for some buyers money is becoming ever tighter. Adding it for free makes sense from a safety perspective," says Production Director Morgan Clissett.

The decision to add these zero-cost options follows last year's introduction of locking devices on catalytic converters and plug-in passenger lift wander leads, complete with a spare in the glove box.

"Adding items to vehicles' specification at no charge is possible through our focus on continual improvements in both production processes and purchasing strategy," says Morgan.

➤ “Already in 2017, for example, we have introduced three enhancements to the range. When we do so, it reduces production costs. We then take the resulting saving and invest it into adding things as no-cost options that, realistically, all of our customers will select because they enhance the product and increase safety.”

The cost of these benefits will be absorbed by Treka, but it sees positives for all parties involved – Treka itself, buyers, drivers and passengers.

“It’s about putting as few obstacles in the way of buyers and building the minibus that they want,” says Morgan, who adds that there should be no fears that quality is being compromised.

“We never cut costs by using cheaper suppliers,” says Helen. “Handrails are a good example. In our vehicles we use a high-grip, textured covering that costs three times what a non-textured finish would, coupled to rubber tactile step indicators to assist blind and partially-sighted passengers.

“People who are infirm can’t grip the cheaper handrail properly. Not only does that make things difficult for them, but it also opens the operator up to the possibility of litigation.”

### Pushing forward

Helen and Morgan add that these enhancements are not being introduced simply to drive volumes. Treka has a strong order book going forward. It currently produces seven minibuses per week, and has potential to increase that number should demand dictate.

“While there is flexibility in 2017’s build programme, we are not going to overtrade by promising too much and delivering too little,” says Morgan.

“We have some other plans that are not yet in the public domain concerning vehicle development. They will be announced later in the year, but we are not going to reinvent the wheel. It will be evolution, not revolution.”

The more minor alterations that Treka makes to its minibuses are often driven by customer feedback. It is able to respond quickly, with all fibreglass mouldings manufactured in-house at a plant near to the main Brighthouse facility.

As an example, Morgan points out two small upright strips mounted adjacent to both sides of the windscreen on the coachbuilt minibus.

Prior to their addition, Treka had identified that in wet weather, water from the wipers was being forced along the side of the vehicle, potentially compromising the driver’s view in the mirrors.

“Within two weeks of us identifying that issue, the strips were made up and we were fitting them as standard,” he says.

“It’s something that many people wouldn’t notice, but minor improvements such as this are just as important as the bigger ones. Our aim every day is to creep a bit closer to perfection, although I am sure that actually, we will never get there.”



Front parking sensors are another zero-cost option, this time when rear sensors specified

### Electric: Not yet

Treka accepts that in the long term, minibuses are as likely as any other vehicle class to head down the electrification road.

But Treka remains conservative on adoption of EV technology, and while it is talking to a number of vehicle manufacturers regarding alternative powertrains, these are unlikely to be seen in a Treka product just yet.

“Electric must be one of the minibus industry’s big future considerations, but range anxiety is still a concern, particularly with battery drain from equipment such as heating and air-conditioning, and lifts. In a five-tonne GVW chassis it is very difficult to get both an acceptable range and an adequate passenger carrying capacity,” says Morgan.

### “It’s about putting no obstacles in the way of customers and building the minibus that they want”

Adding electric vehicles to the production line could also cause a compromise, potentially removing some of the savings generated via efficiency gains that are now being passed on to buyers through the zero-cost options.



The rear-facing nearside camera will come as a no-cost option for buyers who specify reversing cameras

“Last year one of our customers told me that he still had a 12-year old Treka-bodied Sprinter that had covered 420,000 miles and that was used every day. I don’t think that level of durability is close in the electric van segment,” says Morgan.

Electric will come to Treka, but not yet. Instead, 2017 is about trying to set a high water mark for the minibus industry, he says.

“This year, we will push the bar higher. The free-of-charge options come at a cost to us, but they demonstrate our commitment to continued investment in the product – and our customers.” ■



Van conversions are currently more numerous than coachbuilt models but that may change