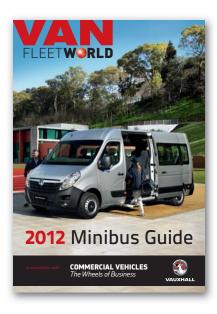


# 2012 Minibus Guide

**COMMERCIAL VEHICLES** The Wheels of Business





**PUBLISHED BY** 



#### Fleet World Group

18 Alban Park, Hatfield Road, St Albans, Herts, AL4 OJJ

t 01727 739160 e vfw@fleetworldgroup.co.uk w fleetworldgroup.co.uk

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#### **Foreword**

OPERATING a minibus is not the straightforward business that you might expect. If you think of it as either a car with more seats, or a van with seats in the back, then it's quite likely that you are steering a course towards one of the regulatory traps that's waiting out there for you.

In common with many vehicles, there is no shortage of legal and licensing issues that operators need to know about.

In association with Vauxhall Commercial Vehicles, we have set out to provide the basic essentials to operating a minibus in this pocket-sized VAN Fleet World Minibus Guide. Whether you are a fleet manager, operator or driver, you will find the information you need on licensing, who can drive what, the use of tachographs, legal definitions and much more in the following pages. If you would like more copies of this Guide, please email vfw@fleetworldgroup.co.uk

John Kendall editor, VAN Fleet World

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### Minibuses – what you need to know...

#### **LEGAL DEFINITION**

The legal definition of a minibus is a fairly simple one. For licence purposes, the Department for Transport describes a minibus as a vehicle with a minimum of nine and a maximum of 16 passenger seats, with or without a trailer that can weigh up to 750kg. There is no upper weight limit in the DfT description of a minibus, but there is no 17–seat minibus available on the market today that has a maximum authorised mass (MAM – also known as gross vehicle weight (GVW) or gross vehicle mass (GVM)) of 3,500kg or below. As we shall see later, this has implications for driver licensing.

To put the minibus definition in context, a car is defined as a vehicle with a maximum of eight passenger seats and a MAM of 3,500kg. From this, it follows that some vehicles, such as the Vivaro or Movano Combi models with a maximum of nine seats (eight passenger seats and one for the driver), for instance, could be classified as a car. This is simply to give buyers a choice of larger passenger carrying models that can be driven by anyone holding a car (category B) driving licence. As we shall see later, there are a number of licence restrictions relating to minibuses, which means that drivers holding only a car licence may not be able to drive them.

The DfT describes a bus, for licence purposes, as a vehicle with more than eight passenger seats. So the minibus, with its seating restriction is effectively a definition for licensing purposes that limits the maximum number of passengers a driver can carry with a particular type of licence.



The market for Combi models has grown in recent years



#### MARKET OUTLINE

As we have said, all new 17-seat minibuses have a MAM exceeding 3,500kg and most of the models based on van chassis, such as the Vauxhall Movano have a MAM of around 4,000kg.

This is because minibus operators want their vehicles to meet passenger car safety standards for such things as seat belt fixings. Most, like the Vauxhall models, are equipped with three-point seatbelts on all seats, to achieve this. This adds weight to the vehicle compared with a van, since the floor must be reinforced to ensure that 17 sets of seatbelt mounting points do their job when they need to and passengers benefit from the maximum protection in an impact.

The market for 17-seat minibuses is small when compared with vans in the heavy van sector. This is partly because licensing restrictions mean that many drivers cannot drive vehicles exceeding 3,500kg MAM without taking an additional test. UK sales are generally in the 1,500 to 2,000 region each year. But these are important vehicles for organisations such as schools, clubs, charities and rental fleets, which is why Vauxhall launched the new Movano 17-seat Minibus in 2011.



#### FINDING THE RIGHT COMBINATION

The driver licence restriction applying to vehicles over 3,500kg MAM is also one reason why the market for Combi models has grown in recent years. As the name suggests, these models combine seating with load space. Airport and hotel shuttle buses, for instance, need generous amounts of luggage space, as well as seating for a number of passengers. Models such as the Vauxhall Vivaro and Movano nine-seat combi models are designed for applications such as these.

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### **Minibus Licensing**

# **COMMERCIAL VEHICLES**The Wheels of Business

Do you need a Public Service Vehicle (PSV) Operator's licence (O-licence) to operate a minibus? As you might expect, the answer depends on how you will be using it.

Generally, if you operate the vehicle for hire or reward and it is fitted with nine or more passenger seats, you will need a PSV Operator's licence, which is different from an HGV Operator's licence. Hire or Reward simply means payment and to quote from the DfT, "The payment may be made by the passenger, or on the passenger's behalf. It may be (a) a direct payment (e.g. a fare) or (b) an indirect payment (this could be an exchange for services such as a membership subscription to a club, payment for a bed in a hotel, school fees or payment for concert tickets where travel is included; the payment does not have to be money and the right to travel does not need to be taken up)." And it doesn't matter if the operation runs profitably or not either.

Vehicles fitted with fewer seats may also need a PSV O-licence for hire and reward work too, if passengers are carried at separate fares, meaning they pay individually – payment being interpreted as in the DfT definition above.

Small operators with one or two vehicles, fitted with no more than eight passenger seats may qualify for a restricted PSV O-licence, which is easier to obtain than a standard licence.

Some not-for-profit organisations can be exempt from PSV licensing if the minibus is operated under a permit scheme. We shall look at these in more detail on the next page.

Detailed information on PSV O-licences can be found in the VOSA publication Public Service Vehicle Operator Licensing. Guide for Operators (PSV 437–02), http://www.dft.gov.uk/vosa/publications/manualsandguides/operatorlicensingguides.htm

#### **PSV and Section 19 Permits**

According to the law, any vehicle adapted to carry eight passengers or more and operating for hire or reward is a public service vehicle (PSV). As such, the vehicle needs to be operated under a PSV Operators licence. In most cases, the driver of a PSV will need to have a passenger carrying vehicle (PCV) driving licence.

Not all minibuses are operated for hire or reward though. Some operate as taxis and we will consider those on the next page. Others are used by notfor-profit organisations, such as charities, schools (excluding private schools), and community groups such as Scouts, Guides, youth groups and churches. Then there are buses used for the social and welfare needs of a community to provide a not for profit community bus service.

The first not-for-profit group can be given exemption from O-licensing and also from driver PCV licensing, under certain circumstances, if the vehicle is operated under a Section 19 permit. The permit can be granted to organisations concerned with education, religion, social welfare or recreation. Minibuses are covered by a "standard permit" which allows them to be used by these not-for-profit organisations to transport their members, or people who the organisation was set up to help. The permit does not allow the minibus to be used to carry members of the general public. Application forms are available on line from http://www.businesslink.gov.uk/transport, or by calling 0300 123 9000. Local authorities also issue permits.

A different permit is needed where the minibus is to be used to provide a not-for-profit community bus service. These are operated under a Section 22 permit. Application forms are available on line from http://www.businesslink.gov.uk/transport, or by calling 0300 123 9000. These permits can only be issued by a traffic commissioner and there is an application fee.

Further information is given in the VOSA Guide, Passenger transport provided under Section 19 or Section 22 permits. Download for free from <a href="http://www.dft.gov.uk/vosa/publications/manualsandguides/operatorlicensingguides.htm">http://www.dft.gov.uk/vosa/publications/manualsandguides/operatorlicensingguides.htm</a>



Operator Licensing

### Minibus Licensing contd...

As we've said on previous pages, most minibuses operated for hire or reward are treated as public service vehicles (PSVs) in the eyes of the law. If a smaller vehicle, such as the Vauxhall Vivaro or Movano Combi is used to operate a for-profit bus service, it would also need to be covered by a PSV O-licence. In some circumstances a restricted licence may be sufficient.

There are two types of standard PSV O-licence, the first for national and international operations and the second for national operations – within the UK, only. Similarly there are restricted licences and special restricted licences. Restricted licences cover small operations for vehicles with up to 16 passenger seats, while special restricted licences can only be granted to someone who holds a taxi licence, or a private hire vehicle (PHV) licence, or the Scottish equivalent, the private car licence (PHC).

- → Standard Licence allows operation of any number of vehicles as authorised by the licence in the UK, or in the UK and overseas, depending on the type of licence. The licence holder or their appointed transport manager must satisfy the requirements of professional competence. Usually this will mean that the licence holder or transport manager has passed the certificate of professional competence (CPC) for national and/or international passenger road transport operations.
- \* Restricted Licence allows the licence holder to operate up to two vehicles with up to eight passenger seats. There are some exceptions to this rule allowing up to 16 passenger seats for businesses that are not involved in passenger transport. Special restricted licences are designed for existing taxi and private hire operators who want to use their taxi to run a local bus service.



#### About Minibuses...

MINIBUSES are defined as people-carrying motor vehicles offering between 9 and 16 passenger seats. The majority of minibuses in the UK are built on commercial vehicle, or van chassis. They either use the van's own body, converted to carry passengers, or a dedicated body from a specialist bodybuilder.

- All minibuses first registered from 1 January 2005 and all diesel minibuses first registered from October 2001 must be fitted with a speed limiter set at 62mph. Speed limited minibuses cannot use the outside lane of a motorway with three lanes or more.
- An unrestricted minibus can still use the outside lane. Otherwise minibuses are restricted to 50mph on single carriageway roads and 60mph on dual carriageways unless lower limits apply.
- The majority of minibuses will have a maximum authorised mass (MAM) of less than 5.0 tonnes. This means that from January 3, 2012, these vehicles will be subject to restrictions within the London Low Emissions Zone. Any minibus with a MAM of up to 5.0 tonnes entering the LEZ after this date must have exhaust emissions that meet at least Euro 3 standards.
- → Vehicles between 1.205 tonnes and 3.5 tonnes, including smaller minibuses and Combi vans, will be required to meet at least Euro 3 standards of emissions. Older vehicles, built before 2002, will almost certainly not meet these conditions. They will therefore require an expensive particulate filter, or will have to pay £100 per day to enter the LEZ zone.
- → Whether driven for business or social purposes, additional licence entitlement may be necessary for drivers of minibuses. There are also age restrictions applicable for the majority of vehicles.
- → Minibuses exceeding 3.5 tonnes MAM or fitted with more than eight passenger seats will also require a tachograph, when used for hire or reward or for any trip overseas. This means that drivers will need to have an electronic tachograph recording card, and they will need to be conversant with EU driver's hours regulations.
- → A fire extinguisher and first aid kit must be carried at all times. A warning triangle and and high visibility garment is needed when travelling through some countries.

### Whole Vehicle Type Approval



YOU might not think that vehicle type approval concerns you, if you run minibuses, but the system of vehicle type approval began to change around three years ago and passenger vehicles were the first to be affected by the changes. From 2009 European Community Whole Vehicle Type Approval (ECWVTA) began to replace the previous system of national vehicle type approval. Now the new scheme applies across all member states.

Type approval is principally concerned with safety. Let's take the Vauxhall Movano 17-seat minibus as an example...

If one minibus is manufactured using identical materials and processes to all other examples, then if you take any model at the end of the production process for measuring, or crash testing or any other form of assessment, then it should be exactly the same size and behave in a crash in exactly the same way as all others. That's what ECWVTA should ensure.

For minibuses, all factory-produced versions must comply with the ECWVTA rules as of October 2011. For anyone acquiring a new minibus, it should also help to speed up the procedure.

Staying with our Movano minibus example, a minibus is effectively a converted Movano van. In the past the buyer would have to buy the van, then take it to a converter who would convert the vehicle to a minibus. Now a visit to a Vauxhall dealer would be all that was needed, in the knowledge that the finished vehicle would be manufacturer and ECWVTA approved, speeding any licensing process needed to use it. If access lifts or ramps were specified for the build, the equipment fitted would also be included in the approval specification. The complete vehicle carries a full Vauxhall warranty. At disposal time, the ECWVTA certification would make the vehicle an attractive buy to a second owner.



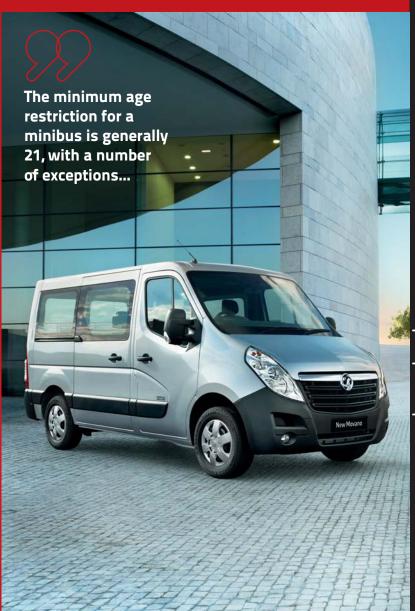
### **Age Restrictions**

For a driver with the relevant licence entitlement, the minimum age restriction for a vehicle with between nine and 16 passenger seats is generally 21. However, there are a number of exceptions to this rule.

→ Members of the armed services can drive a minibus from the age of 17.

## An 18-year old may drive a minibus under the following conditions:

- → If they are learning to drive or taking a passenger carrying vehicle (PCV) test or a Driver CPC initial qualification.
- → If they have passed a PCV driving test and a Driver CPC initial qualification, they are permitted to drive on a regular service where the route does not exceed 50km, or if they are not engaged in carrying passengers, or if the vehicle is in a class included in sub-category D1.
- → If they have passed a PCV test before September 2008 and are driving under a bus operator's licence, or minibus permit, or community bus permit, they are permitted to drive if they are driving on a regular service where the route does not exceed 50km, or are not engaged in the carriage of passengers, or are driving a vehicle included in sub-category D1.
- → A 20-year old may drive a minibus after passing a PCV driving test and Driver CPC initial qualification.
- → Drivers over the age of 70 will need to make a special application, involving higher medical standards than those required for a car licence.



### Adding a D1 PCV category

ANYONE driving a minibus whether for hire or reward or not must hold the appropriate licence. This is a category D1 licence, or if driving a minibus towing a trailer, a D1+E licence. Drivers must be 21 years old to hold these licences, although there are exemptions for members of the armed services who are permitted to drive minibuses at 17. Some civilian drivers may drive at 18 if certain conditions are met.

Most drivers who have held a full car driving licence since 1 January 1997 will not have automatic entitlement to hold a D1 category licence. They will need to apply using a D2 application pack, although there are some exceptions and a number of conditions must be met.

Anyone without a D1 licence can drive a minibus with up to 16 passenger seats provided they meet all the following conditions:

- → They drive for a non-commercial organisation, for social purposes, but not for hire or reward.
- → They must be 21 or over, have held a car (category B) licence for at least two years and provide their service on a voluntary basis.
- → The minibus must not exceed 3,500kg MAM or up to 4,250kg if specialist equipment is fitted to carry disabled passengers. This includes tail lifts, and wheelchair fittings. They must not tow a trailer.

Drivers who held a full car driving licence before 1 January 1997, shown as group A (B for automatics), or categories B and D1, not for hire or reward, can drive a minibus with up to 16 passenger seats, but not for hire or reward. To drive a vehicle with nine or more passenger seats for hire or reward, they will need to pass the relevant test to gain category D or D1 entitlement.





A minibus will have a maximum authorised mass (MAM), which is clearly marked on the identification plate, and exceeding this weight is a serious offence. If any driver feels that there is a danger of overloading, particularly where some seats are removed or used to store additional luggage, the minibus should be taken to a weighbridge and checked.

IF a minibus is being used to take children to and from a school, it must carry two yellow reflective signs, of a prescribed size and design, bearing the symbol of two school children.

OPERATORS can also display institutional blue badges or the blue badge of a qualifying individual, when carrying disabled passengers. Having this badge allows the driver to park and to wait while a passenger boards or alights. It cannot however be used on private roads, off road car parks, some town centres with limits on vehicular access or in some parts of central London.

WHEN driving, it is an offence for the driver to hold a microphone, unless in an emergency. Hands-free mobile phone systems can be used, but are advised against. The driver should also not be in regular conversation with passengers while the vehicle is in motion.

IF the minibus is equipped with a reversing alarm, this should be properly maintained, but should not be used between 23.30 and 07.00 hours. Drivers should also consider additional measures when reversing, including extra mirrors, parking sensors, reversing lenses and rear view cameras.

DRIVERS should take all reasonable steps to ensure the safety of passengers entering and leaving the minibus. Assistance must be offered to disabled or elderly passengers, however only trained personnel should use passenger lifts.

AN empty minibus will react very differently to a fully laden vehicle. Stopping distances will increase when laden and drivers should drive at an appropriate speed when cornering and manoeuvring. They should also ensure that all passengers remain seated while the vehicle is moving, using seatbelts supplied.



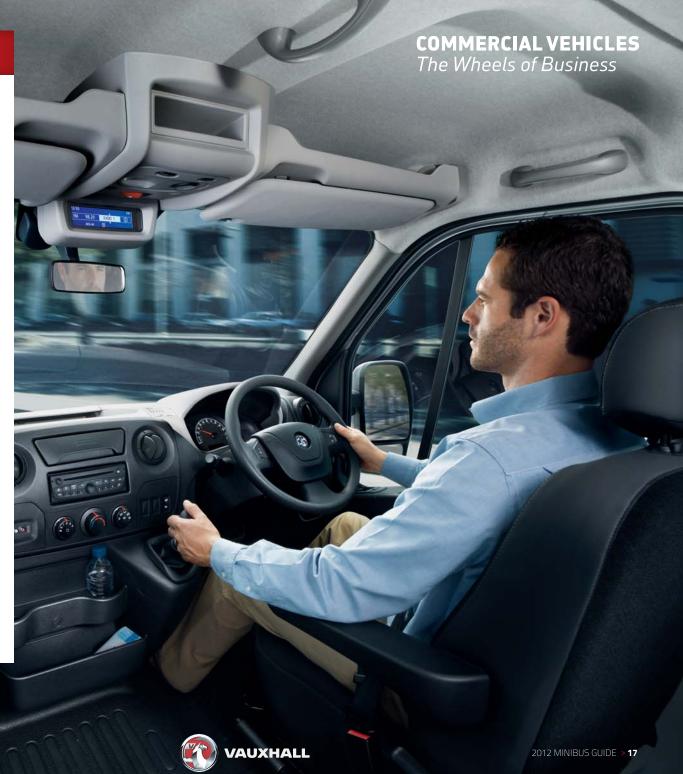
### Who is entitled to drive a Minibus?

ANY driver who had entitlement to drive a car before January 1, 1997 can drive a minibus with up to 17 seats, including the driver's, as long as the minibus is not being used for hire and reward. If you passed your car test after January 1, 1997, you will need to apply for a minibus licence (category D1).

# You may drive a minibus without a D1 entitlement if you meet all the following criteria:

- → You drive on behalf of a non-commercial body for social purposes but not for hire or reward
- → You are aged 21 or over
- → You have held a car licence for at least 2 years
- → You are providing your service on a voluntary basis and the minibus maximum gross weight is not more than 3.5 tonnes excluding any specialist equipment for disabled passengers. (Minibuses up to 4.25 tonnes are permitted if the minibus includes a tail lift or specialist wheelchair security fittings).
- → You do not tow a trailer

If you wish to drive for hire or reward, you will normally require a passenger carrying vehicle (PCV) licence, which requires higher medical standards and a further driving test. However, if you drive a minibus that has nine or more passenger seats for an organisation under the minibus or community bus permit scheme, you will not need to have the higher PCV entitlement while driving within the UK. Minibus and community bus permits are issued to organisations concerned with education, religion, social welfare, recreation and other activities of benefit to the community. There are certain conditions under which you can drive a minibus under the age of 21 (see page 12).



### Driving outside the UK...

ALL British licence entitlements are accepted during visits to other European Community/European Economic Area (EC/EEC) countries. However, drivers operating under the minibus and community bus permit schemes, who have not passed a PCV driving test for category D1 or D, are not permitted to drive a minibus for hire or reward overseas.

Drivers who become permanent residents in another EC/EEA country, may also find that their entitlement to drive D1/D1+E minibuses not for hire or reward, may no longer be acceptable. They should check with licensing authorities in that country.

From January 2006, any new minibus travelling in mainland Europe must be fitted with a speed limiter. In addition, a tachograph must be fitted and the EU drivers' hours regulations observed on all passenger carrying vehicles with more than eight seats, when used abroad for hire or reward.

All UK insurance policies will provide third party cover when abroad, which is compulsory in many countries, but you may need to contact your insurance company to be sure that full cover is provided while overseas. Even where no additional cover is required, it may be a condition of your policy that your insurer is informed before any trip to another country.

It is also recommended that any minibus that is being driven abroad should have adequate breakdown and recovery cover. This should include repatriation of both the vehicle and the passengers, to avoid additional costs in the event of a major breakdown. This can be arranged through most UK breakdown cover companies.

If the minibus is hired, a waybill or control document must be completed and carried on the vehicle while abroad. It may also be advisable to have translations available for all documentation.



### **Useful Advice**

#### Maintenance

Maintenance is an essential element to operating a minibus as it is for any passenger carrying or commercial vehicle. VOSA has produced a Guide to Maintaining Roadworthiness: Commercial Goods and Passenger Carrying Vehicles. This is available for download from www.businesslink.gov.uk



The guide emphasises the importance of regular, planned maintenance and highlights the importance of regular safety checks and default reporting, with proper procedures to ensure that problems are rectified. Written records need to be kept for at least 15 months, listing faults reported and details of the work done to rectify them. Written records of safety inspections need to be kept for a similar period too. It's really a common sense guide to maintenance, but designed to prevent safety issues from arising.

#### **Traffic Commissioners**

Operator licensing for minibuses, trucks and buses is handled by a team of independent area Traffic Commissioners, each responsible for one of the Traffic areas: Eastern, North Eastern, North Western, South Eastern and Metropolitan, Scottish, West Midland, Welsh, and Western. O-licenses are granted in perpetuity, but the Commissioner can also withdraw a licence if a holder consistently fails to conduct the transport operation in accordance with the terms of the licence.

#### Links and publications

VOSA produces a number of useful guides for Minibus Operators. including:

- → "PUBLIC SERVICE VEHICLE OPERATOR LICENSING. GUIDE FOR OPERATORS"
- → "PASSENGER TRANSPORT PROVIDED UNDER SECTION 19 OR SECTION 22 PERMITS"

These can be downloaded from:

→ http://www.dft.gov.uk/vosa/publications/manualsandguides/manualsandguides.htm

The DVLA produces two useful minibus driving guides:

→ "DRIVING A MINIBUS" and "A BRIEF GUIDE TO DRIVING A MINIBUS"

These can be downloaded from:

→ http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Motoring/DriverLicensing/ WhatCanYouDriveAndYourObligations/DG\_4022498

Details of the Vauxhall passenger carrier range can be found at:

http://www.vauxhall.co.uk/vehicles/vauxhall-range/vans/ movano-ng/passenger\_carriers/passenger\_carriers.html

You can also use the "Call me back" tab on the Vauxhall website at

→ http://www.vauxhall.co.uk/ or contact your local Vauxhall dealer.



#### Vauxhall Movano Minibus

Vauxhall's purpose-built Movano Minibus provides comfortable, safe accommodation for 17 people, including the driver. As a factory-built minibus, rather than an after-market conversion, the vehicle carries a full Vauxhall warranty, guaranteeing total peace of mind for operators.

Laid out with offset double seats on one side of the aisle and single seats on the opposite side, customers can also specify that the rear two sets of seats are set on floor-mounted rails, allowing them to be easily removed if necessary for additional load space.

Built upon the Movano L3H2 chassis, the Minibus has a fully trimmed interior, with overhead coat racks and walkway illumination. An electrically operated retracting side step is standard, providing easy access through the wide sliding side door. The door itself can also be powered as an option.

Inertia-reel safety belts tested to passenger car standards are fitted to every seat, along with padded head restraints to provide comfort and security. Each passenger seat is also equipped with individual down-lighting, while airconditioning with aircraft-style vents is available as an option.

The Movano Minibus is powered by Vauxhall's highly efficient Euro 5 compliant 2.3CDTi engine, providing 125PS of power. This drives the front wheels through a smooth-shifting six-speed manual gearbox or an optional six-speed Tecshift automated manual transmission.

Vauxhall's Electronic Stability Programme (ESP) system is standard equipment on the Minibus, ensuring maximum safety for passengers. The low emission, CDTi engine delivers a combined fuel economy of 33.6–34.4mpg and produces just 222g/km of CO<sub>2</sub> in manual form, or 214g/km with the Tecshift gearbox.

With a gross plated weight of 3.9 tonnes, the Minibus is supplied as standard with a digital tachograph and the vehicle is speed-limited to 62mph in accordance with UK regulations.

A wide range of optional extras is available to tailor the Movano Minibus to a customer's individual needs. These include additional rear compartment air conditioning and heating, cruise control, satellite navigation with a remote colour monitor and a rear view reversing lens.



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van-like load carrying abilities, can choose a Movano Combi, with a choice of six of nine seats. The 6-seater Combi is based on the short wheelbase L1H1 Movano, while the 9-seater uses the L2H2 medium wheelbase van as its starting point for additional carrying capacity.

The Combis have a bench front passenger seat with a second, and in the case of the 9-seater, third row of bench seats behind. Optional removable bench seats in both rows are available to boost carrying capacity.

The 6-seat short wheelbase Combi is equipped with a Euro 5 compliant 2.3CDTi engine delivering 100PS. This model returns a combined fuel consumption figure of 37.7mpg and produces just 205g/km of CO<sub>2</sub>.

The 9-seat Combi can be specified with the Euro 5 2.3-litre engine rated at 125PS or 146PS. As with the Movano Minibus, the 125PS Combi has a choice of six-speed manual or Tecshift automated gearboxes, while the 100PS and 146PS engines deliver their power through conventional manual six-speed gearboxes. Fuel consumption for the 9-seater ranges from 34.4-38.2mpg, with emissions levels of 195-216g/km.

ESP stability control included as standard, while customers can also tailor the vehicle to meet the demands of their individual operation with a host of options.

WARRANTY 3 years /100,000 miles BODY OPTIONS SWB / MWB SEATING 6-seat / 9-seat

#### Vauxhall Vivaro Combi

Vauxhall's Vivaro Combi is a 9-seat people carrier that is available in both short and long wheelbases options. Both models feature folding seats in the third row, to provide additional load space when required.

The vehicles have full-length headlining and half-height panelling throughout, delivering a comfortable environment for passengers. Twin side sliding doors are standard, with the option of sliding windows within these doors. At the rear the Combi comes with a high-lift tailgate for ease of loading, complete with heated window and wash/wipe facility.

The short wheelbase Vivaro Combi is powered by the proven 2.0CDTi 16V engine, delivering 90PS and driving through a six-speed manual gearbox. Long wheelbase models benefit from the same engine in 115PS trim, and can be ordered with the six-speed manual box or a Tecshift six-speed automated manual transmission.

Both short and long wheelbase models can also be ordered in ecoFLEX specification, though only with the manual gearbox. You can also specify an optional speed limiter that can be set at 56,62 or 68mph, helping to reduce fuel consumption and the operator's carbon footprint. The Vivaro Combi ecoFLEX offers a fuel consumption figure of up to 40.9mpg combined, and a CO<sub>2</sub> rating of just 180g/km.

A wide range of options is available for the Vivaro Combi, including a digital tachograph, air-conditioning, a speed limiter, towing equipment and cruise control.

WARRANTY 3 years /100,000 miles BODY OPTIONS SWB / LWB SEATING 9-seat







Whether you are a fleet manager, operator or driver, you will find the information you need on minibus licensing, who can drive what, legal definitions and much more inside...

