



Smart use of vans and pedestrian couriers could make online shopping faster and more sustainable

Dunton, UK, 11 February 2021 – More than at any other time, 2020 was the year of the home delivery, with few signs of online shopping slowing in 2021. However, the rise in digital retail has placed increased pressure on courier services to dispatch more goods to our doorsteps – and to do so more quickly and efficiently.

Now, Ford is working with Hermes to trial a sustainable courier service that could both reduce the footprint of parcel deliveries in cities – and make them more timely. The innovative approach is designed to help support cleaner air and clearer roads.

Ford's smart MoDe:Link software coordinates traditional delivery vans with pedestrian couriers, identifying safe locations for drivers to park within walking distance of multiple delivery addresses. From there, the final leg of the journey is completed on foot.

If adopted, the initiative could make more effective use of vans on the road as well as helping tackle air pollution and ease congestion.

Smart deliveries

MoDe:Link, Ford's intelligent logistics software, identifies safe, convenient locations for the handovers to pedestrian couriers and coordinates those teams as they make deliveries to a mix of high-rise, business and residential buildings.

The couriers use a simple smartphone app that advises the location of the van and shows the most economical routes and itinerary to deliver the parcels. The app integrates with Hermes' tracking systems to ensure customers have real-time visibility of the status of their deliveries.

The overall system orchestrates the end-to-end journey for each parcel, ensuring that deliveries – whether on the first mile from the depot by road, or the last mile to the doorstep on foot – are as efficient and as sustainable as they can be. Initially focussed on London, Ford and Hermes will now explore extending the pilot to further areas of the UK.

Last Mile Delivery is just one of the ways in which Ford is exploring how connected technologies can help promote cleaner air in cities. [A recent study across three European cities](#) showed how blockchain and dynamic geofencing can complement plug-in hybrid electric vehicles, such as the Ford Transit Custom PHEV, to contribute to improved urban air quality, benefiting cities, citizens and operators.

Signs of success

Hermes is one of the UK's leading consumer delivery specialists, handling more than 630 million parcels last year. The partnership with Ford was launched in September by its team from the Hermes Innovation Lab across an area of central London and was put to the test during one of the busiest times of the year for parcel deliveries.

Working through the Christmas peak, the pilot service met unprecedented demand for home deliveries. Operating alongside a team of eight pedestrian couriers and located across three

postcode areas, two Ford Transit vans delivered the same number of parcels as six vans making conventional doorstep deliveries – and did so more quickly.

The people factor

In an industry that has had to race to recruit delivery drivers to meet consumer demand, the pedestrian delivery model opens the door for a whole new workforce who no longer need to drive or own a vehicle.

With pedestrian couriers delivering up to fifty parcels per shift, there are fitness and wellbeing benefits to the role; couriers may also potentially benefit from flexible working patterns that can fit around family commitments. During the Ford trial, the pedestrian courier workforce included hospitality staff who found themselves unable to work in their usual occupation because of lockdown measures.

Quotes

“Being smarter about how we deliver parcels in the future will enable carriers to operate more sustainably and efficiently – while delivering a better experience for customers. Our trials with Hermes have shown how multi-modal deliveries can be scalable and effective, even during peak times of the year.”

Tom Thompson, project lead, Ford Mobility

“We are exploring new delivery initiatives that can reduce emissions for the final mile delivery as part of our commitment to sustainability, and to also be prepared for further incoming legislation in cities, such as ultra-low emission zones. In addition, this operating model is easy to scale up to meet the increasing demand for home delivery and opens up the courier work for a whole new workforce who no longer need to drive or own a vehicle.”

Carl Lyon, chief operating officer, Hermes UK

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Ford in Belgium & Luxemburg

Ford Belgium distributes Ford vehicles and Ford original parts in Belgium & Luxemburg, since 1922. Ford Lommel Proving Ground is the lead test facility for validation of all Ford models in Europe, with approximately 390 employees.

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