

# Cool movers

A small refrigerated van that is both practical and 'nippy around town' can be important for many food businesses. NICOLA COTTAM sizes up the options.

**B**efore spending on a refrigerated van it's important to do your homework. Vehicle costs vary hugely, as do the refrigeration units themselves in both size and temperature range.

Many van dealers recommend the Citroën Berlingo, Ford Connect or Renault Kangoo. These are seen as compact, reliable, durable and spacious and, if bought from a dealer that specialises in refrigerated vans, can come fitted with the unit of your choice.

Chris Warburton is the owner of refrigerated van dealer CoolVan. He says: "There are a tremendous number of variables to consider when buying a van. Our job is to remove these variables to make life a lot easier for customers. The average retailer needs a van that is designed to do many small trips rather than one long one, and these vans are suited to this job."

A typical 'small' 1.6- to 2-litre diesel van, like the Berlingo, comes with power steering and air bags. Extras like electric front windows and central locking are often thrown in as well – for an average £13,000 (plus VAT) for a nearly new model with refrigeration.

Nick Weller, director at van specialist Cool-Move in Somerset, says it's important to do some research before you decide on a unit. "Not all refrigeration units come with a defrost

unit, for example, in which case it will only be able to achieve temperatures down to -2°C and many people will need much cooler temperatures. Single-phase stand-by may also be useful for some buyers because it gives them the option to plug the van's refrigeration unit into an external electricity source when the engine is switched off – if they are spending time at a farmers' market, for example."

Engine bay fridges are also available and Italian fridge manufacturer Eurofrigo can supply electric refrigeration units for panel and box vans, which have low emission levels and operate at full capacity at all times – even when the van is just ticking over – giving greater temperature stability.

Eurofrigo has also developed environmentally-friendly electric fridges that are completely self-contained with fewer core components. This means there are fewer redundant or disposable parts and reduces the amount of 'hard waste' at the end of a fridge's operational life.

CoolVan is also tapping into the environmentally-friendly market with a recently launched subsidiary, The Green Van Company, which supplies a range of electric vehicles. The price tag is a lot higher than a standard vehicle – a comparable small van, like the Piaggio Porter, will set you back around £20,000 – but in the longer term a green van could prove good value for money, especially for businesses operating in London.

Warburton says: "These vehicles will particularly appeal to people in central London. However, I doubt there is much of a market for them outside London. The benefits to Londoners are not entirely obvious but they are considerable. Drivers of

electric cars don't have to pay the annual £2,000 congestion charge for a start and many London boroughs also exclude electric cars from having to pay road fund duties. Add in the fuel savings and suddenly electric vehicles appear altogether more appealing."

The majority of CoolVan customers buy through higher-purchase over a three to four year period, which gives them a lot more flexibility if they want to swap vehicles mid-contract.

Cool-Move supplies new and nearly new vehicles – between six and 12 months old – to buy, lease-purchase or finance lease. The two latter options are the most flexible and therefore the most popular methods of payments. Says Weller: "Higher purchase periods range from 12-60 months depending on the age of the vehicle and finance lease is generally for two to five years. At the end of the finance lease period the leaseholder retains 95-97% of the sale value of the vehicle. They can also opt to extend the lease period for a further 'peppercorn period' [or secondary lease]."

Many dealers offer a sign-writing service for an additional £100-£3,000. Lead times vary from three to four weeks – although in the summer delivery can take up to eight weeks. CoolVan can deliver vehicles within 10 days, however, according to Warburton. "I know what people want and already have vehicles built up that suit 90% of our target users," he says.

Choice and service levels will vary according to your local dealer and if they aren't satisfactory it may be worth going further afield to get what you want. Buying a van is major expense, so don't go for second best.

www.coolvan.co.uk

www.cool-move.com

Eurofrigo: 01788 56749



Citroën Berlingo is seen as compact but still spacious



The 'green' Piaggio Porter costs around £20,000

'Green' vans can prove good value for businesses operating in London