



South West Water & Lightfoot Improving efficiency through changes in driver behaviour

Utility businesses across the UK are looking to improve efficiencies, lower accident rates and reduce unnecessary costs where possible. In an intensely competitive market, technology is playing an increasingly influential role in enabling utilities to achieve this, and no more so than in the fleet sector.

One business that has been leading the way in this respect is South West Water which, following an extensive 14 month trial of Lightfoot, has rolled out the in-cab driver coaching solution to improve the safety, well being and efficiency of its drivers in more than 500 of its vehicles.

Managing a fleet of over 800 commercial vehicles, including cars, vans and vehicles up to 3.5 tonnes, Mark Karkeek, Fleet Manager for South West Water, has been responsible for managing the utility's fleet for the past two and a half years.

Over this period, Mark has trialled a number of solutions to maximise the efficiency of the fleet, and to help its drivers become safer and more aware of their driving styles. After exploring a number of options, including traditional telematics solutions, South West Water turned to Lightfoot, an in-cab driver coaching technology that uses engine analytics data to help drivers drive safely and more efficiently through real-time feedback.

Lightfoot appealed to Mark as it not only delivers typical fuel savings of over 15%, but it also reduces accident rates by as much as 50% while delivering substantial cuts in CO2 emissions.

Impressed by its track record relating to driver well being, South West Water wanted to see whether Lightfoot could deliver similar results amongst its own drivers.

Initially Lightfoot was trialled in 10 vehicles, which were chosen due to their overall poor fuel consumption and generally high service, maintenance and repair spends.

South West Water tested Lightfoot 'blind' for an initial month during which it simply monitored driving styles and efficiency rates.

"This established a base line across the vehicles, which meant that we could see any uplift in performance once Lightfoot was switched on," said Karkeek.

"We then went 'live' with Lightfoot for a month, during which its audible and visual alerts became operational. This enabled us to monitor any uplift in performance. To further validate the results, and to ensure that these were 'driven' by Lightfoot, we then went back to a 'blind' monitoring phase for a further month."

The outcome of the initial trial impressed the team at South West Water and, encouraged by the results, the company chose to extend the trial further.

As Karkeek comments: *"The results were really positive. They gave us the confidence to extend the trial to a further 54 vehicles. The rationale here was clear. The vehicles, which were transferred into the fleet, were all brand new, featuring the latest EURO 5 - Stop Start specification. We wanted to see whether Lightfoot would have any significant impact on these vehicles too. As before we conducted a blind, live and second validity blind trial. We weren't disappointed."*

When Lightfoot was introduced Karkeek says his drivers were initially uncertain about how the in-cab coaching system would work. "New technology always throws up questions. That's why we worked closely with our drivers to explain that unlike other systems that simply monitor and report on driving style, Lightfoot puts the driver in control. With real-time coaching it enables them to drive more safely and more efficiently, without the need for fleet manager intervention."

Unlike traditional telematics products, which simply provide 'after the event' data on driver behaviour, Lightfoot's real-time approach directly influences driving style 'in the moment'. It empowers drivers to change the way they drive out of choice through audible and visual alerts that trigger when poor driving occurs. This enables the driver to instantly modify their driving style, allowing them to self-correct, which means that the fleet manager does not need to be informed of every minor infringement; a feature that's attractive to both drivers and fleet managers.



Martin Kadhim, Sales Director at Lightfoot explains: *“Lightfoot understands the engine of each vehicle and how it can be driven most efficiently. This means we can help drivers stay in the vehicle’s ‘sweet spot’, avoiding over acceleration and unnecessary stresses on the engine.”*

“Importantly, because Lightfoot recognises that there are instances where drivers need to accelerate more rapidly, such as joining a dual carriageway with a short slipway, these manoeuvres are not automatically flagged to fleet managers. The driver will receive an alert, but as long as this is not repeated twice in quick succession it won’t be logged. Understanding this helps remove concerns that necessary acceleration will be reported regardless of the circumstances. It’s something that separates Lightfoot from telematics systems that are, by comparison, more indiscriminate.”

By working with the driver, Lightfoot actively encourages an improved driving style, which has significant positive implications for driver well-being. If a vehicle is driven in an inefficient or overly aggressive manner the driver first gets a visual prompt with lights that go from green, through amber and into red. This in turn triggers a spoken warning advising them to improve their driving style. If no improvement in driving is made, a second verbal warning is given. Finally, if the second warning is also ignored, a report is issued to the fleet manager.

This interactive approach encourages the driver to alter the way they drive, rapidly and sustainably changing ingrained driver behaviour, cutting incidents of over-acceleration, harsh breaking and the occurrence of driving styles that can lead to higher accident levels as well as unnecessary stress on the driver, engine and vehicle.

This is a feature that appeals to South West Water: *“The fact that drivers can self-manage their performance in their own vehicle means that they have every opportunity to improve without managers having to get involved, which is less stressful for all concerned”* says Karkeek. *“This puts the individual in control and makes for safer drivers. It’s one of the main reasons that we have seen such dramatic improvements in driver efficiency; it’s a win, win situation for all concerned.”*

One of the key management features of Lightfoot is that it enables fleet managers to set KPI efficiency targets for its drivers. Each week drivers can see how they are performing and they can also see where they rank against their peers in their local team. This helps to encourage competitive efficiency.

During the trial the vast majority of Karkeek’s drivers stayed within Lightfoot’s optimal green zone - which is the desired performance level that South West Water specified its drivers should achieve. With KPIs set at a minimum efficiency rate of 88% in the green zone, Lightfoot helps South West Water’s drivers consistently achieve and exceed this rate, lifting driving standards and associated safety levels while reducing CO2 emissions and fuel bills.

Across the trial of 64 vehicles, which ran for over 12 months, South West Water saw fuel savings in excess of 15% with a 25% uplift in the amount of time spent by drivers in the optimum ‘green zone’.

“We’ve been very impressed with Lightfoot from day one”, says Karkeek. *“During the blind trial we saw driver efficiency rates hovering at around 65%. Once Lightfoot engaged, that rose to just shy of 90% and many drivers have excelled, achieving percentages in the high 90%.”*

But it’s not just fuel savings that Lightfoot delivers. By enabling its drivers to drive more efficiently and within the individual vehicle’s ‘sweet spot’, Lightfoot is also helping to reduce wear and tear rates too. South West Water will be looking closely at its service, maintenance and repair spends to see what positive impact Lightfoot has on lowering these costs.

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In addition to this benefit, Lightfoot offers a practical solution to a problem faced by all fleet managers: telematics data overload.

“Lightfoot is great for us as it offers a simple ‘delivered solution” says Karkeek. *“There’s no need to wade through masses of ‘big data’. Instead we get useful information that’s easy to interpret enabling us to actively help those that are underperforming or driving in a style that could put them at risk. In the few instances where this occurs we offer further training including IAM courses. For us it’s all about continuous improvement. Given that we get bombarded with masses of reports every day, Lightfoot’s data-light solution is a welcome relief.”*

As with all its clients, Lightfoot provides South West Water with a simple weekly traffic-light report requiring no intervention. Drivers high in the green zone are consistently operating in the optimum efficiency sector. Drivers high in amber are flagged as a potential concern (but tend to respond quickly to Lightfoot), while drivers in red require attention, possibly through driver training to address any specific and regularly occurring issues.

Printed out in a league table format showing the drivers who are performing best at the top and those that are performing less well at the bottom, the weekly report is easy to digest and, unlike traditional telematics solutions, is information light. This simple approach enables South West Water to easily review driver performance over the course of the year.



Together, these factors created a strong case for a rollout of Lightfoot to the wider South West Water fleet. As Karkeek says: *“Lightfoot helps us to achieve significant results without taking up too much management time. This, combined with the prospect of consistent fuel savings and the opportunity to develop a team of more empowered, efficient and safer drivers, formed the basis of a compelling business case to roll Lightfoot out to more than 500 of our fleet vehicles.”*