

March 2002 CV registrations down 6.2%

Registrations of new commercial vehicles in the United Kingdom				
	March	% change	YTD	% change
Total	39,273	-6.2%	80,017	2.6%
LCVs	33,957	-5.5%	67,046	3.9%
HCVs	4,886	-11.4%	11,905	-4.6%
Buses & Coaches	430	-3.2%	1,066	9.7%

Total CV registrations in March

March figures completed a first quarter where registrations stayed 2.6 per cent ahead on the total for the same period in 2001. The growth was in January and February rather than March. The 39,273 registrations in March were 6.2 per cent short of last March and closer to the March 1999 total of 39,409.

'Even with the modest downturn last month, we expect the year's CV registrations will still be near or above the long term average,' said SMMT chief executive Christopher Macgowan. 'Car type pick-ups, 4x4 utilities and Micro vans all bucked the trend, showing good growth.'

The shortfall relative to March 2001 was broadly based, with a few notable though low volume exceptions, like 4x4 utilities and pick-ups.

This year's Easter break meant two days less for processing registrations and this may have affected the comparison. March is a key month in the annual registration calendar and since the biannual age identifier (March and September) was introduced in 1999, generally takes over 12 per cent of annual registrations.

Slower economic growth and an increase in interest rates are expected to inhibit sales growth this year, but the timing and extent of the change is uncertain. Most analysts expect a slightly weaker market for 2002 as a whole, but the outlook still is positive, particularly with the US economy clearly recovering.

Annual CV registrations should remain well above the 298,500 average for the 1998 to 2001 period despite the presence of some economic and market uncertainties.

Light commercial vehicle registrations

LCV registrations fell by 1,963 or 5.5 per cent in March. However, three low volume segments in the market up to 3.5t gvw recorded some growth. Car type pick-ups shot up 117.2 per cent to 1,514. 4x4 utilities were up 24.9 per cent to 1,692. Micro van registrations were up 12.9 per cent to 603.

Very strong demand in the 2.6 to 3.5 tonne heavy van registrations has driven the overall market forward recently with 14 straight months' growth at an average of about 18 per cent until March, when 17,900 registrations represented a fall of 6.1 per cent. This segment has been at the centre of the recent changes in the UK van market, in 1997 heavy vans took 58.1 per cent of all LCV registrations, by 2001 the share was up to 65.5 per cent.

New truck registrations

As in February, growth in truck registrations dipped again in March, down 11.4 per cent following the 5.0 per cent drop in February. The total rigid market was down by 9.3 per cent and artic registrations fell 16.1 per cent following a 22.5 per cent drop in February. For the first quarter all truck registrations were down by 4.6 per cent, just 1.7 per cent for rigids and 10.9 per cent for artics.

Within the rigid sector there were only a few contrasts to this March's lower registration trend across the axle configurations and weight categories. Two-axle 7.501 to 12t rigids were up 36.5 per cent to 142 registrations. The 3.501 to 7.5t category saw 450 registrations, growth of 6.1 per cent. Four-axle rigids also grew 8.0 per cent to 345.

Two and three axle tractor registrations again fell in March, down by 33.7 and 7.0 per cent respectively. For the three months to date, registrations remained down by 14.6 per cent and 9.3 per cent for two and three-axle tractors respectively.

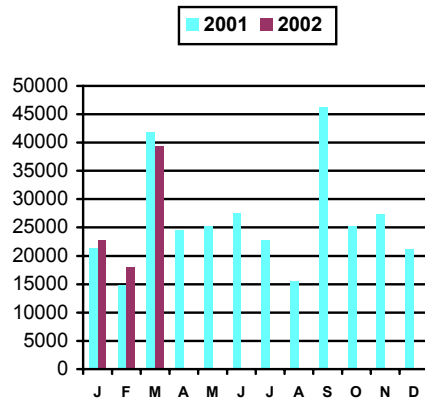
New bus & coach registrations

March bus and coach registrations were down 3.1 per cent to 403, following February's near 40 per cent growth. Overall the 1,066 first quarter registrations are 7 per cent up. Growth over the 2000 and 2001 quarters was due to coaches, up by 39.6 per cent to 342 vehicles. Fare stage PSVs totalled 724, modestly down by just 0.4 per cent. The industry remains cautious, not expecting sustained growth this year.

If you have any questions, please call Robin Dickeson

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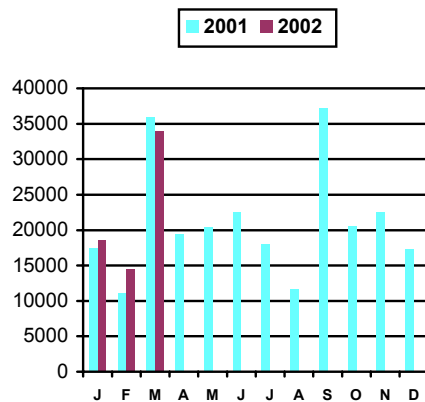
All New CV registrations Jan 2001 to date



March 2002 new CV registrations down by 6.2 per cent, but first quarter remains 2.6 per cent up:

- on par with March 1999;
- first real weakness in months;
- artic demand dips again;
- heavy van growth momentum may have ebbed;
- 4X4 utilities and car-type pick-ups score positively;
- may be signal to slower growth ahead.

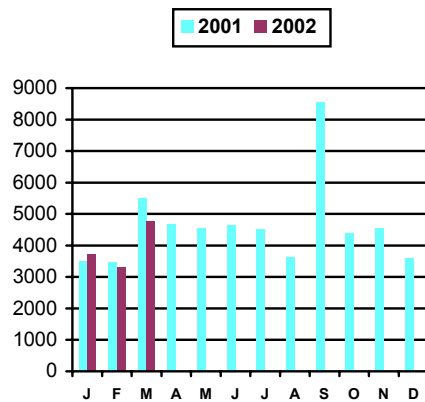
All New LCV registrations Jan 2001 to date



LCV new registrations fall by 6.5 per cent in March, but still 3.9 per cent ahead for first quarter:

- weak sales in key segments;
- strong growth in 4X4s and especially pick-ups;
- LCVs 87 per cent of all CVs;
- heavy vans, 2.6 to 3.5t, 46 per cent of all CV sales, but fall by 4.2 per cent in March;
- market potential good, but possibly first warning of slower growth ahead.

New Truck registrations Jan 2001 to date



March 2002 sees trucks sales slip by 13.6 per cent and also down by 4.6 per cent for the first quarter:

- 3.5 – 7.4t, 7.5 – 12t & 4 axle rigids see growth in March and for the year to date;
- artic fall 16.1 per cent for month, 10.9 per cent quarter;
- March may herald weaker truck sales in the near term;
- Truck market over 6t may fall below 50,000 units in 2002.