March 2019 | Case Study | Quiet Vehicle Sounder

University of Birmingham Adopts QVS

As you enter the grounds of the University of Birmingham, you will notice the great lengths they are going to, to provide a sustainable environmentally friendly campus. Looking after the environment has always been at the centre of their focus and the green initiative is clearly working; The University of Birmingham generate 75% of their own energy and have met the target of reducing CO2 emissions by 20% four years early.

Reducing CO2 emissions is in part due to the switch to electric vehicles which started back in 2007 when they became the first university in the United Kingdom to go electric. 40% of their fleet are now electric, a number which is growing each year as they continue to follow the mantra of asking the question “is there any reason this replacement vehicle can not be electric or hybrid”?

However, the transport industry acknowledges switching to electric vehicles has not come without issues. The very nature of electric vehicles means they are extremely quiet

at slow speeds which often leads to accidents with vulnerable road users who do not hear a vehicle approaching.

The University of Birmingham needed a solution to ensure their electric vehicles could be heard by the 35,000 students who attend the institution each year. Often idling between buildings and distracted by their phones, the students were often not paying attention to the many paths and roads around the university where the electric fleet operates.

Brigade Electronics were asked to help solve this quiet vehicle issue after being introduced as vehicle safety experts by a mutual supplier. Brigade's Quiet Vehicle Sounder (QVS), a device designed to warn vulnerable road users of an approaching electric/hybrid vehicle, was the perfect solution. Fitted to the front of the vehicle, the QVS is audible up to 20mph and simulates the characteristics of a combustion engine so those in the danger zone can hear the vehicle and take any necessary evasive action.

After trialling the QVS for a year, the University reported zero incidents with pedestrians and zero near misses. The electric vans could now be heard in high traffic areas where students would be walking to and from lectures.

"The QVS provides absolute peace of mind to our drivers. Driving a quiet vehicle in high foot traffic areas can be very stressful, especially with the sheer number of students we have walking or cycling through our campus. The QVS eliminates that worry and ultimately keeps everybody safe. We will be making sure all new electric vehicles joining our fleet are fitted with a Quiet Vehicle Sounder, there's no questioning why you would not have one installed." – Chris Lane, Operations Manager, The University of Birmingham.

The University are also pleased to have had zero issues with the Quiet Vehicle Sounder. From washing the fleet to everyday driving, the Quiet Vehicle Sounder has continued to uphold its safety guarantee.

After winning multiple awards in recognition of the Universities commitment to the environment such as "Sustainable Fleet" at the Green Fleet Awards and "The Green Apple" in 2016, the university can continue to endorse electric vehicles while keeping vulnerable road users and their fleet safe.

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