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Small truck mounts - where to now?

In the three years since our last feature on small vehicle mounted aerial lifts (3.5 tonnes and below) the sector appears to have taken a breather in terms of dramatic product development, after a decade of spectacular growth in working heights and new technology. The market is changing again but in a more sober and less dramatic fashion. C&A takes a look at the latest new products and developments.

The market for 3.5 tonne truck mounted aerial lifts is a growing sector across Europe, as Northern and Eastern Europe follows the lead of countries such as Italy and France where they filled a role covered by trailer lifts in the north.

The move is of course also spurred on by the ever increasing number of people with driving licences that limit them to driving vehicles under 3.5 tonnes fully laden. For several years we saw a race to the top as manufacturers strived to design

platforms with the highest working heights possible for the lightweight chassis. Topping out at 28 metres, that race is long over and Ruthmann can claim to have been the overall winner, while there are a few Italian manufacturers still aiming high the average working heights are now declining as other performance criteria come to the fore - this in spite of the increased use of ultra-high strength steel resulting in lighter booms for a given height. The primary reason for using lighter booms is now to offset the growing



A Multitel MJ 201

weight of the chassis due to heavier and bulkier engines driven by stricter emissions legislation.

Keeping the weight of the platform - including driver and up to two passengers with a full tank of diesel, outrigger pads and a small amount for tools - under 3.5 tonnes is an increasingly difficult task. Whether this is indeed possible depends on the manufacturer's interpretation of the EU Type Approval and IVA Approval - is it road legal, is it legal to be driven on the road or is it safe to be driven on the road? And how the manufacturer reaches this decision. How the issue of being overweight is enforced is also relevant to the decision? In the UK for example the actual weight of the truck and its contents on the road is critical - over 3,500kg and you run the risk of being stopped and fined. In certain some countries you are allowed to take off any additional items from the truck before it is weighed.

Trends

Most manufacturers are moving away from the extreme 26 to 28 metre working height platforms as they move to lower heights, with higher platform capacities, more outreach, smaller footprints and

possibly a more rigid platform. The average working height now seems to be settling around 19 to 23 metres. This also has the benefit of leaving more room for the usual day-to-day items such as outrigger pads etc without being overweight. The Nissan Cabstar chassis is a particular favourite being the lightest 3.5 tonne chassis available.

In terms of outriggers, most manufacturers have moved away from the A frame style to beam and jacks - or 'H-type' - which allow in-board jacking on one side or both, and variable positioning. The future is surely totally variable outrigger positioning with sensors inputting the chosen configuration to a central control unit, along with the weight in the platform which then calculates a custom working envelope.

At the bottom end of the working height range, the final demise of the Land Rover Defender has accelerated the shift to alternative compact 4x4 chassis with the Isuzu D-Max and Toyota Hi-Lux pick-up trucks leading the way. These small 4x4 platforms are becoming increasingly popular with utility companies, arborists and anyone else needing to go off-road to reach their work.



Manufacturers such as Ruthmann are using multi bend boom profiles to increase strength while keeping weight low



One of the many Italian manufacturers is Manotti



A 26 metre Palfinger P260B

Italy rules

In the 3.5 tonne sector of the truck mounted market, Italian manufacturers increasingly dominate by offering a winning combination of quality, performance and price - with local dealers sometimes having to ensure the necessary backup is provided.

For many years the market was divided between high quality, high-tech, high-priced German products versus lower specification, variable quality, poorly supported but cheap Italian machines. That is a sweeping generalisation to make the point and there were always a few exceptions to that rule. However all that has changed, and in recent years the Italian producers have won an increasing slice of the 3.5 tonne market. Companies such as Ruthmann and Palfinger Platforms tried to break the trend with simpler, more basic model series but it was clear that this is not where their engineers' hearts were and they struggled to compete in the cut-throat, price-sensitive mass market sector that the Italian producers have learned to live with.

Palfinger was the first to break rank, taking a controlling interest in

Italian company Sky Aces in 2013, creating Palfinger Italy based in Bolzano. The company then shifted its concentration to high volume, lower cost 3.5 tonne platforms, with the existing operation building niche products like the Tunlift tunnel maintenance platform being transferred to a new company.

Ruthmann has now followed suit with the acquisition of Bluelift and its Ram truck mounted lift range. The company had looked at producing lower priced platforms in Hungary a few years back, but for several reasons this did not happen. Palfinger has also launched its first spider lift - probably the next 'essential' lift in a manufacturers line-up. It also continues the mirroring of development between the two companies.

With the two big German companies joining the Italians, the number of other manufacturers in this sector is further diminished. Time Versalift in the UK and Denmark, Ascendent in the UK, and France Elevateur in France are some of the notable non-Italian players that remain although there are a few murmurs from the East. Earlier this year Poland's Beckmann Volmer



Ascendent in the UK is one of the notable non-Italian players that remain. Here is its 22 TJ sold to Blade Access

Technology of Gdansk delivered one of its first 19 metre BVT STJ-19 truck mounted lifts to a local utility company. The company currently has just two truck mounted models but also sells a tractor mounted lift. While labour and social costs may be substantially lower in Eastern Europe, the Italian producers have always invested heavily in automation, generally have little debt and have the benefit of hundreds of small local suppliers to support them. So don't expect 3.5 tonne production to shift to lower cost areas anytime soon.

spiders and RAM truck mounted platforms - is intended to provide a new line of cost-effective 3.5 tonne platforms. The Ecoline range will include a range of telescopics to 18 metres and articulating boom models up to 20 metres providing an alternative to Ruthmann's existing high specification, high-tech German-built 3.5 tonne lifts, which include four machines topped by the 27 metre TB270+. Launched six years ago the TB 270 has sold well with the 650th unit delivered last year to French rental company Kiloutou.



The Ecoline will provide an alternative to Ruthmann's existing high specification, high-tech German-built 3.5 tonne lifts



Italy has a plethora of manufacturers manufacturing platforms on 3.5 tonne truck chassis such as CMC

What is always surprising is the fact that while the Italian manufacturers dominate the market for smaller machines, they thin out dramatically when it comes to products over 30 metres. This has slowly been changing as companies such as Multitel - which has always been an exception - Socage, CTE and Oil&Steel launch new larger models and improved product support giving increased confidence.

Ruthmann new range

Ruthmann's recent acquisition of a 60 percent stake in Italy's Marti group - manufacturer of the Bluelift

The upgraded TB270+ uses a new boom with higher strength steels and new fabrication techniques with a 'multi-bevelled' boom and superstructure design, similar to that used on the 22 metre TBR 220. The changes allow the TB 270+ to be mounted on the latest 3.5 tonne Euro 6 chassis, including the Mercedes Sprinter, VW Crafter, Nissan Cabstar and Renault Maxicity. The new design also has improved performance including the ability to go to its full height with 230kg in the platform, while offering up to 16.4 metres of outreach with its reduced



The Ruthmann TB270 has sold well

100kg capacity - almost two metres more than the machine it replaces.

Palfinger Smart class

Palfinger now has a substantial number of models in its Italian built Smart Class range, topped by the 28 metre P280 AXE although several are now too heavy for 3.5 tonne chassis. The range begins with a 13 metre P130A, launched at Vertikal Days last year - usually mounted on a pickup truck, such as the 4x4 Ford Ranger 2.2 TDI, with a total GVW of 3,200kg - it offers up to 6.3 metres of outreach. Other models that work well on 3.5 tonne chassis include the 14 metre P140T, the 16 metre P160TX and 17 metre P170T telescopic and the articulated P200A and P240A, all are available with different configurations creating a 12 model/variant range if the P280 is included. Palfinger also produces a range of telescopic models at its plant in Germany. Designated the Light range it includes 15, 18, 20, 21, 22 and 26 metre models all with aluminium booms and one of them - the P210BK - with a jib.



Sogace launched its 3.5 tonne E Series work platforms with X-shaped chassis and 300kg platform capacity.

New E series from Sogace

Sogace launched its 3.5 tonne E Series work platforms with electro-hydraulic controls, X-shaped chassis and 300kg platform capacity. The E series is the result of a collaboration between Sogace and Austrian company Welser, which produces special and ultra-light steel profiles and fabrications. This resulted in the SPP (Sogace Project Profile) and the development and use of very high strength tubular profiles to produce an ultra-light chassis. Sogace says that SPP's advantages include a more modular design, and a 30 to 50 percent weight saving in superstructure parts.

Models in the E series include the forSte 21DJ - a 21 metre, dual sigma type riser articulated platform with jib, and the 20 metre forSte 20TJ telescopic with jib which has been created specifically for the German market, with automatic outrigger set-up, memory function controlled from the basket and automatic boom stow functions. At the top end of the range is the 28 metre forSte 28D, a dual riser articulated platform with 14.5 metres of outreach. This new

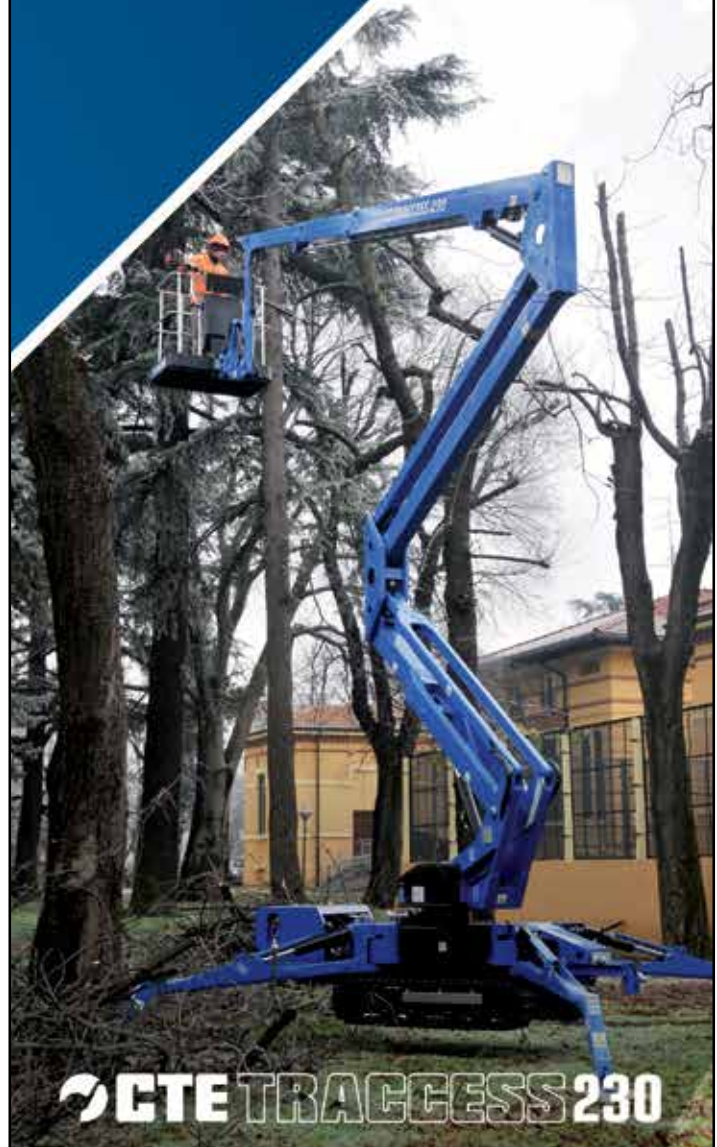


Palfinger now has a substantial number of models on 3.5 tonne chassis such as this P170T

At the top end of the range is the 28 metre forSte 28D, a dual riser articulated platform with 14.5 metres of outreach.



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version is said to be lighter than the previous model, which was too heavy for most markets and is becoming increasingly challenging for a 3.5 tonne chassis. You have to ask the question, do you really need the extra few metres of height almost right above the machine, or is better to offer a more stable feel to the platform, more capacity or more outreach?

Oil&Steel Scorpions

Oil&Steel also has a new range of 3.5 tonne platforms including two straight telescopic Scorpions - the 2313 and 2112J. The 22.6 metre Scorpion 2313 has a 250kg platform capacity and 12.8 metres of outreach with 100kg in the platform. The new 21 metre Scorpion 2112J has an articulated jib a 230 kg maximum capacity and 12 metres maximum outreach with 120kg. Oil&Steel, now part of Manitex, says that these new truck mounts have been designed to be compact



Oil&Steel also has a new range of 3.5 tonne platforms including two straight telescopic Scorpions - the 2313 and 2112J (above)

and light, with easy set-up and work faster, more comfortable with improve reliability. Both feature H-type multiple position outriggers and a slope compensation feature. The new 24 metre Snake 2413 articulated model also uses the latest high strength steels with a redesigned boom geometry and is mounted on a short 2.9 metre wheelbase chassis keeping the unit compact, variable jacking positions are possible, including an inboard only configuration for working in a single road lane.

GSR steps up a gear

GSR has ranked among the better Italian producers for many years and has quietly exported a good deal of its production to Northern Europe when most others companies were firmly focused on the home market. It does not however have

the flashiness of some of its more flamboyant competitors but that is all beginning to change as it has been updating its product range and at Vertikal Days, will launch its new UK direct sales operation. This follows a year or so where it has tested the waters by selling to five major accounts with the help of industry veteran Andy Northwood. The move was triggered by the increasing conflict within its UK dealer SkyKing which also represents Palfinger as explained earlier is increasingly pushing into the 3.5 tonne market. The trial has paid off handsomely with Nationwide Platforms placing a 43 unit order, having tested the company's van mounted lifts last year. The new order is made up of the new 20 metre B200PXs articulated boom models with 300kg unrestricted platform capacity, on 3.5 tonne Mercedes Euro 6 chassis with narrow jacking, the 22 metre E228TJ straight telescopic with articulating jibs on 7.5 tonne chassis, and 17 metre E179T telescopic on 3.5 tonne Iveco chassis.

The B200PX is a classic example of the trend towards more practical machine heights on this size of truck, with its 300kg platform capacity and 8.7 metres of unrestricted outreach. It is a 'true 3.5 tonne truck mount including fuel, occupants and all the equipment required for a days' work'.

Isoli diversifies

The Isoli range is going through a complete overhaul and update, including a new range of simple, robust competitively priced models for the rental sector and a range of higher specification machines for end users and high tech markets. The company will launch the new 19 metre PT 190J at Vertikal Days, which features a three section telescopic boom plus articulated jib,



GSR B200PX is a classic example of the trend towards more practical machine heights on a 3.5 tonne truck with its 300kg platform capacity and 8.7 metres of unrestricted outreach



The new Isoli PT190J will be at Vertikal Days 2016



The 20 metre Multitel MT 204 20 is mounted on a Nissan Cabstar chassis

a maximum platform capacity of 250kg and direct hydraulic controls. The company says that it is simple and easy to use and service and ideal for the self-drive market. The lift can be mounted on almost any 3.5 tonne chassis, although the 3.5 tonne Nissan Cabstar is recommended - probably because it is the lightest available. The PT 190J goes into production this month, along with the new 13 metre MPT 140 articulated boom, mounted on a pick-up truck. Isoli launched two other platforms at Bauma - the 20 metre PT200J and the 23 metre PT230.

Multitel Pagliero

Multitel has launched two new telescopic booms mounted on 3.5 tonne trucks - the 22.6 metre MJ 226 with jib and the straight 20 metre MT 204 - both on Nissan Cabstar chassis. Developed from the popular MJ 201 the MJ 226 offers up to 12.4 metres of outreach with 80kg in the platform, or 250kg with up to 9.4 metres outreach. The jib allows the platform to reach from two to eight metres below ground level.

The other new Multitel product is the 20.5 metre MT 204EX which has an outreach of 9.2 metres with 300kg platform capacity extending to 14.3 metres with 80kg. The 80kg capacity is a result of European regulations citing 80kg per person plus 40kg for tools as the guidelines for

determining how many occupants the platform can take, although wind sail effect is another factor that must be considered. One cannot help but wonder how long 80kg will survive, as it allows nothing for tools, and an increasing number of operators weigh 80kg or more, especially when equipped with full PPE, a harness and a few tools etc.... However, the Multitel overload sensing device is fully proportional and will further restrict outreach for heavier operators or loads.



Multitel has launched two new telescopic booms mounted on 3.5 tonne trucks including the 22.6 metre MJ 226 with jib.

CTE

CTE was one of the pioneer of the dual sigma riser articulated truck mounted lift, with its Z, later Zed range of machines in the 20 metre area. In recent years it has added to the Zed range and redesigned it to incorporate new higher strength steels and new features. Its 20 metre offering remains popular and is represented now by the



The CTE 20.6 metre Zed 21.2 JHV with a new Smart Stability System

20.6 metre Zed 21.2 JHV with a new Smart Stability System - S3 - which is available on all of its 3.5 tonne lifts. It uses a variable H-type outrigger configuration and automatically adjusts the capacity and lifting envelope to match the actual outrigger footprint.

Maximum outreach is 9.9 metres and maximum capacity 300kg. The Zed range is now topped by the 22.5 metre Zed 23.2 JH which like the 21.2 features an articulated jib and H-type outriggers but offers 230kg platform capacity.

CTE also offers several telescopic models on 3.5 tonne chassis which is now topped by the 27 metre B-Lift 27 which had its world premier at Bauma. Full details are



CTE had the world premier of its new 27 metre B-Lift 27 at Bauma

not yet available but the lift features the S3 stability system and uses the latest 1.5mm thick Strenx high strength steel.

Versalift

Versalift offers the light and medium ranges of platforms mounted on chassis up to 3.5 tonnes ranging from the 9.2 metre Versalift LT-23-90-TB on the VW Amarok 4x4 pick-up truck, to the 22.2 metre VTX-240 on the Nissan Cabstar. One of its latest developments is its 13.3 metre LAT135-H platform - mounted onto updated 3.5 tonne Isuzu D-Max and Toyota Hi-Lux pick-ups - which



Versalift's 13.3 metre LAT135-H platform incorporates certified low voltage - 1kV AC - insulation to European LV standard VDE 0682-742

C&a

truck mounts

incorporates certified low voltage - 1kV AC - insulation to European LV standard VDE 0682-742.

The LAT135-H Low Voltage insulation within the boom structure, platform controls and fittings allows dielectric flash-testing while fully assembled and prevents electric shocks being passed on to people on the ground who might inadvertently touch the vehicle, mainframe or outriggers after the machine has made contact with a live conductor. The system has been adopted by Scottish Power which has recently taken delivery of a number of units.

Co.Me.t

Co.Me.t never disappoints when it comes to innovation. The company has a wide range of truck-mounted platforms from its Euroskey 22/2/10 HQ jib on a 3.5 tonne chassis to the Mini Truck 14/2/6 HQ Jib mounted on 2.2 tonne Porter Piaggio Maxi. This tiny platform has a working height of 14 metres and outreach of six metres with up to 200kg in the platform and can be used for areas where standard 3.5 tonne trucks cannot reach.

Another 'alternative' platform is the

X4 Pick-up with a working height of 12 metres and 4.5 metres outreach with a 150kg platform capacity. The machines boom folds laterally behind the cab within the width of the chassis, as a small loader crane might, leaving more room for a cargo bed or van to be mounted. The company also produces insulated platforms and an usual truck mount called the Solar which uses a 3.5 by two metre platform on a boom similar to the MEC Titan. It does however need a five tonne chassis, giving it a working height up to 16 metres.

Comets mini truck 14/2/6 on a Porter Piaggio Maxi



Comet Solar.



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A different way of doing business

It is funny how some companies are known for certain things - even though it may have happened years before and have nothing to do with the current business or operations. Mention Italian cars - and Lancia in particular - to any UK driver of a certain age and rust will immediately spring to mind. Continuing the car theme - German cars would be quality and Japanese cars, reliability. In our sector Terex would be acquisition - even though it abstained from major acquisitions for getting on 10 years.

One company that has changed enormously over the past five years is Kettering, UK-based CPL - or Cumberland Platforms Ltd as it originally traded - yet most still tend to think of it as a small operation, either making Land Rover Defender-based platforms or selling mostly in the Middle East though Iraqi connections.

While there was some truth in both these statements back in 2009, since the new company was formed in 2011 it has transformed, developed and expanded so much that the current business bears no resemblance to the previous company. CPL now claims to be UK market leader in the 4x4 platform sector, having built and sold 180 units last year. This year it says that it is running ahead of that figure producing four units a week.

It also represents six manufacturers in the UK - Socage, Terex Utilities,

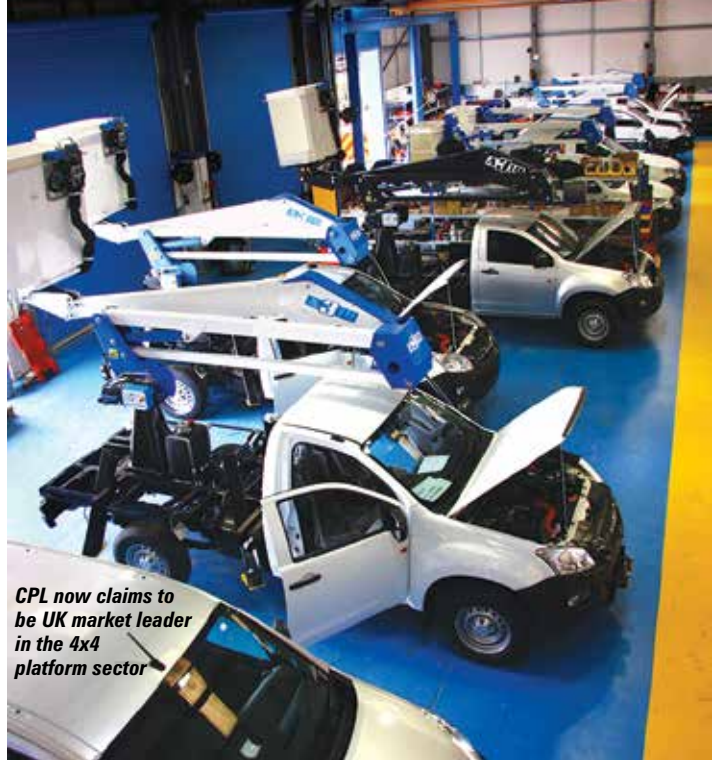


Paul Murphy

Iteco/Imer, Easy Lift, MultiOne and its most recent addition Klubb van mounts. Revenues this year look to be up around 45 percent to £8 million and it now employs 42. To keep up with the rate of growth it extended its facilities last year, adding two more service bays - but has had to purchase two more even larger facilities - around 3,000 square metres in total - nearby primarily to cope, but also to bring some production processes in-house



CPL is investing to bring more production processes in-house



CPL now claims to be UK market leader in the 4x4 platform sector

in order to solve supply issues - one of its biggest problems.

"We are installing a new powder coat paint shop in the next few months and have already set up a bending, welding and fabrication facility," says managing director Paul Murphy. "There is also the Vinyl House graphics and decal division and we have our own accessories

the end product will be a CPL machine because we are the ones that build, supply and support it," says Murphy. "The customer knows exactly the equipment he is buying but our policy is to produce CPL machines. Take the 4x4, truck and van mounts for example, we manufacture the sub-frames and mount the booms - so around 60



The company has set up a bending, welding and fabrication facility to manufacture sub-frames

such as our range of spreader plates."

Despite the rapid expansion over the past three years, the mainstay of the business remains its 4x4 platform business, however, this looks set to change.

Its marketing policy is to brand all of its products as CPL, rather than use the manufacturer's branding. For example, if a utility customer wants a 14 metre 4x4 truck mounted lift, it will supply a CPL A314, which is actually a Socage A314 boom with CPL superstructure mounted on an Isuzu D-Max or Toyota Hi-Lux.

"We will supply any access solution using the most suitable equipment we have from our franchises, but

percent of the total work/materials are done in the UK."

Since 2011 CPL has concentrated on the compact 4x4 market, initially with Land Rover Defender chassis and then moving to the Toyota Hilux in 2012 and the Isuzu. It claims to be the preferred supplier to six of the seven major utilities companies in the UK, possibly outselling its closest competitor by three to one.

"We have found success building simple and reliable machines to the customers' specification, then standing by the product and giving total support," he says. "We have been adding to our support structure setting up a new subsidiary company - CPL Fleet Services -

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with a 650 square metre depot in Ipswich. The facility has been set up to carry out both commercial and non-commercial vehicle repairs as well as repairs to access and other equipment."

Murphy said that he never wanted to be a one manufacture, one product company and will look at any products where there is synergy. This is the main reason behind expanding its franchises to include the MultiOne multi-purpose loader in the Northampton,

Peterborough, Luton and Milton Keynes area.

Products

The company's range now extends to a wide range and variety of other platforms including Imer spider lifts from 13 to 19 metres, Socage and Easy Lift truck mounted lifts to 70 metres, insulated boom platforms with Terex Utilities, the new Klubb range of van mounted lifts and full range of Imer/Itesco scissor lift models.

"The best-selling 3.5 tonne truck



The company represents six manufacturers in the UK including Imer



Four pick-up mounted platforms are being produced per week

mounted platform is the 20 metre Socage DA320 which has a total operational weight - ie with driver, passengers, fuel, pads and some tools - that remains road legal," says Murphy.

The company is just starting out with the new five model Klubb van mounted range, running from nine to 15 metres working height.

"These van mounts will complement our existing lines. I am very impressed by the quality of the product and also the commitment that Klubb has shown. I feel this will take us to the next level and I have already received positive vibes from both existing and new customers. One of these and a selection of other products will be exhibited at

Vertical Days in June alongside our other products, with demonstrations starting after that."

However, with the 4x4 platforms currently representing more than 90 percent of the company's business the new products could make a big difference should they gain a solid foothold in the market.

"The truck mounted, spider and scissor lift sales need to eventually represent about 50 percent of the business," says Murphy. "The addition of the Klubb and Imer/Itesco products will mean CPL can offer even more solutions and by bringing more of the manufacturing processes in-house, result in an improved product in terms of quality and performance.

Iconic Whittle plane flying high

The UK's largest powered access rental company Nationwide Platforms provided a local charity one of its 29 new Isuzu mounted Versalift LAT135-H pickup truck mounted platforms to inspect a replica Gloster E.28/39 plane in Lutterworth which commemorates the achievements of Sir Frank Whittle, inventor of the jet engine.

The platform was provided to the Frank Whittle Commemorative Trust and used to inspect the plane's condition following poor weather and high winds. Fitted with BF Goodrich off-road tyres, the four wheel drive LAT135-H had little difficulty reaching the replica aircraft at the centre of a roundabout on the road approaching Lutterworth, home town to both Nationwide and Sir Frank Whittle. Its 13.3 metre working height and 6.1 metre outreach also ensured the

engineer was able to reach all elements of the plane as well as inspect its internal steelwork. Following the examination further work has now been scheduled to clean, repair and paint the aircraft.

Given the costs of ongoing repairs, coupled with the age and health of the charity's trustees, there had been concerns that the plane would need to be dismantled and removed.

Fortunately the trust has been awarded a £12,000 grant from the Harborough District Council and £1,000 from the Lutterworth Town Council enabling it to carry out major remedial work in situ.

Nationwide's Peter Douglas said: "The Frank Whittle plane represents a major part of our country's heritage and is synonymous with the town where we are based. Although the trust has been awarded a grant to carry out essential repair

work, we did not hesitate to do our part and offer our assistance

to ensure the iconic plane remains flying high."

Nationwide Platforms provided a local charity one of its 29 new Isuzu mounted Versalift LAT135-H pickup truck mounted platforms to inspect a replica Gloster E.28/39 plane in Lutterworth which commemorates the achievements of Sir Frank Whittle, inventor of the jet engine



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