

The Lesser WAV



When it comes to WAV conversions, there are familiar models available, such as Renault and Peugeot. However the market is much more diverse, so why not look further afield?

Three manufacturers who are rarely heard about, but no less welcomed in the wheelchair accessible vehicle conversion sector, are Vauxhall, Mercedes and Nissan. While there are fewer companies working with these bases, the results once converted offer a strong equivalent to the more established motors available.

Vauxhall is the second largest car manufacturer in the UK in terms of market share, behind Ford. In 2009 they were miles ahead of other competitors in the new car sales market. The Vauxhall Zafira is a popular make of MPV, and is one of the marques best selling vehicles, coming in before the Vectra for a number of years. With the ability to seat seven, across three rows, it has plenty of space to be converted into a wheelchair accessible vehicle. Gowrings Mobility work on the Vauxhall brand, not only offering the Zafira, but also the Combo and the Movano, larger WAVs depending on the



needs of the user. All of these vehicles derive from the road car market, where Vauxhall lead with strong handling vehicles which are designed in Europe, and built for the British roads.

Mercedes is a top end vehicle manufacturer and known for its attention to detail. In fact, as a German manufacturer, it is expected to rise above all others when it comes to build quality and reliability. The MPV version of the Vito is derived

from the successful small commercial vehicle, and offers good headroom and a large amount of space. While starting life as a van, there is no denying that Mercedes put a lot of time and effort into all their vehicles. From the driving quality to the strong suspension, the comfort is unparalleled in any other commercial vehicle based product. Plus any owner can boast the prestige of having the three-pointed star on their bonnet. There is plenty of room on the inside too. Traditionally, the Vito can carry up to nine people. Therefore, depending on how the space is used to accommodate the wheelchair, that can leave up to eight seats, plenty of space for families.

There is however, a third option available to all those looking to purchase something wheelchair friendly. For those who enjoy off-roading, or who want something to be able to cope with various rugged terrains, Brotherwood offer conversions on the Nissan X-Trail. This is

actually a compact SUV, meaning that it is more at home on the road, but can handle limited off-road adventures. Brotherwood's conversion means the X-Trail is no bigger than a standard SUV, so it will still fit into garages, and drive with ease. With seating for four plus a wheelchair user, a flat floor and an access ramp, which descends from the tailgate once the boot lid has been adapted, it is possible one of the least obvious WAVs on the road.

So while there are obvious choices on sale from converters, there are also many more options available that offer great drives from strong brands. The WAV world is more diverse than ever, so when it comes to choice, be sure to choose well.

For more information on buying a car or WAV contact Motability (www.motability.co.uk, 0845 456 4566) or the Forum of Mobility Centres (www.mobility-centres.org.uk, 0800 559 3636). If you're looking for a top-class secondhand vehicle give Mobility Nationwide (www.mobilitynationwide.co.uk, 01824 707773) a call.

vauxhall, mercedes and nissan

Gowrings Mobility

Gowrings Mobility has been converting vehicles for 45 years, with particular emphasis on the space, safety, visibility and comfort for the wheelchair user, and their range of Vauxhall conversions is no exception.

The new Zafira for example has a stylish exterior creating a bold visual identity, whilst its spacious interior benefits from the latest Gowrings conversion techniques, which combine to provide a sleek and spacious solution for any wheelchair user wanting to travel in a stylish people carrier.

The Combo Tour – a natural successor to the popular Renault Kangoo due to its compact car-like design accommodates up to one wheelchair user, 3 seated passengers and the driver. It handles well, cruises around town with ease and feels a lot like its cousin, the Vauxhall Corsa.



Finally the Movano SWB and every detail has been purposefully designed with the needs, comfort and safety of the wheelchair user in mind. As with Gowrings Mobility smaller wheelchair passenger vehicles, their team of design engineers come up trumps with a superb conversion, ideal for fleet operators or larger families.

Contact: Gowrings Mobility,
www.gowringsmobility.co.uk, 0845 608 8020

Brotherwood Automobility

There are many good vehicle converters in the UK, but Brotherwood is the only one whose name is really synonymous with product and service quality.

The company's carefully chosen range of cars caters for virtually every individual need and every pocket. It includes the Peugeot Partner, the hugely successful VW Caddy Life and the Fiat Multipla, which is popular with passengers wishing to travel alongside the driver. For family transport, Brotherwood also offers the Kia Sedona, which has proven to be a winner, and the VW Sharan, a long-time favourite.

The Brotherwood ethos is to provide comfort and dignity for disabled passengers and their family. New and previously owned wheelchair cars are available for purchase or for short and long-term hire for both private buyers and those wishing to use the Motability scheme.



The same professionalism can be found at Invatravel Conversions, which is now a division of Brotherwood Automobility. The company produces a side-loading wheelchair accessible VW Caravelle; it also offers a selection of Brotherwood conversions for hire from its Southport premises.

Contact: Brotherwood Automobility,
www.brotherwood.com, 01935 872603

Des Gosling Mobility Ltd

Based in the Derbyshire town of Melbourne, Des Gosling Mobility provides a whole range of vehicle adaptations and solutions.

Owner Des Gosling, who holds a bachelor in mechanical engineering and has ten years' previous experience in the aerospace industry, founded the company in 1993. Since then his aim has been to provide excellent products and service standards while keeping this small business warm and friendly. "In our company all the staff is highly skilled and regularly attends specific training to learn about the ever growing variety of adaptations available from the UK and the rest of the world," he explains. "Our experts want to continually improve as each small detail can make the difference between a conversion that merely works and something that's a pleasure to use."



The business' ability to satisfy its customers can be seen in the raving feedback it receives. "Many thanks for a splendid, real engineering job carried out in a very professional manner," wrote Mr Davis from Loughborough. Another client added, "I am delighted with the system; the freedom it has given me is unbelievable."

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