

customer care

payload

**New look
N Series Isuzu
adequately
performs
its 7.5 tonner
role round
TN's Central
Scotland
route.
Thanks
to its
NEES2
manual
and/or
automated
box, the
journey
proved stress
free for
Alistair
Vallance,
urban delivery
driver for a day.**



YOU CAN immediately see where the Isuzu NQR 7.5 tonner can pile on the payload. It's all down to the light weight, minimalist, two metre wide cab that, although taking a bit of getting used to initially, soon proves perfectly adequate for inter-city and urban delivery work.

The secret is to master the entry/exit routine: Open the door to the 60° catch, right

foot on the step, right hand on the all-important forward grab handle, ease up and slide that ass! (*With all due respect to Renault who shake it!*).

Once into the routine the system works fine, but don't open the door to the full 90° or, unless you eat six bananas a day, you'll never reach the door grip

to close it!

In last month's four hour, city/urban/motorway appraisal, I took to the cab. It's much bigger than I thought and driver vision through large lumps of glass is superb. Also, there's cross cab access and the 'centre' seat back folds forward



On road to spare

to offer a handily placed writing table.

The physical dimensions of the cab do not change from the earlier NQR, but some clever external panel engineering gives the vehicle a more stylish, modern and aerodynamic appearance. New headlamps with polycarbonate lenses further enhance this image.

Once onboard, you really don't require a full run-down on the NEES2 system. It's almost a standard industry layout for a box that offers fully automated shift and a manual sequential changing facility with a push forward, push back touch on the little stick.

Worth remembering on your first visit is the ignition's total refusal to activate unless your right foot is down on the service brake pedal.

It's a five speed overdrive gearbox and there is no longer a clutch pedal inside the cab, neither is there a conventional gear lever.

There is no clutch plate either. The system uses a wet clutch with a fluid coupling that allows the vehicle to 'creep' to offer a smooth and progressive take-up when pulling away.

Surely everybody understands the benefits that an automatic gearbox offers drivers in terms of aiding fatigue, stress

and safety especially in an urban distribution environment. And whilst the NEES2 system offers these same benefits, I found it has other advantages over the conventional 'automatic' gearbox.

It has five gear ratios (typically only three or four in an automatic box), it offers impressive fuel economy and has a lower initial production cost, claims Isuzu.

On fuel consumption, we were running without a flow meter, but the Japanese manufacturer testifies to an average 18mpg with the 143bhp engine and manual box. With the new 150hp power plant, we were to expect in excess of this figure and certainly more so with the automated box and the 'economy' button activated, when another 2 to 3mpg can be expected.

Well, in truth we achieved an average of 16.22mpg, with little use of the economy button mainly because traffic on the A71 and 89 eastwards and A80 back to base was unseasonably heavy. We were happy enough with the result, perhaps vindicated by a low 39.84mph average speed due to various areas of urban congestion.

In these dead stop circumstances I soon learned



that a bleeper suddenly goes off demanding that you move out of auto and into neutral before the journey can recommence.

When well out on the route, I tried auto mode with the economy button depressed. It was a bit annoying at first as the box, of its own accord, skipped up a gear early and down a gear late.

I guess that's where the economy lies, and I have to admit that if I was paying the fleet fuel bill, I would have that button laminated in the 'on' position! However on test, I

favoured the much livelier 'off' mode.

Our test vehicle weighed in at a remarkably light 3,500kg complete with Derek Jones box body and with a svelte yours truly on board! Once the 4 tonne payload was added we were up to 7.5 tonnes gross; impressive by any standards.

Back to in-cab buttons, the Isuzu NQR offers an adequate array of driver aids. Next to the gear stick and alongside the economy button is the first gear start 'activator' for steep hill take-off illustrating the beauty of a five speed box, ▶



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since it normally moves off on second.

To the right of the wheel, a bank of three buttons offer, right to left, an easily accessed interior light switch, a cold start button which ensures that the cab is heated first, and the fog light. At the wheel the right stalk activates the lights and indicators, leaving the left stalk to take care of wipers and, with a manual click up, the exhaust brake.



After taking leave of Imperial Trucks' Govan base, I took an instant liking to the NEES2 easy shift box, in fact the cab also shot up in my estimation, not only for all-round vision but comfort too. Although it is as well the driver enjoys a suspension seat (optional) since the alloy steel leaf suspension, even at full gross weight, records bumps on the road, in spite of shock absorbers fore and aft. I suspect a move to air suspension at an optional £1,200 would be a good investment.

So much for the down side. Among the super-plus points in no order of priority, was the 5.2 litre engine performance. Even with a full 4 tonne payload its 150bhp provided a flat 404Nm torque 'curve' between 1,500 and 2,600 revs. Just what you would expect to accommodate an automated box.

Then there's the cab, growing in acceptability all the time. I began to enjoy swinging onboard courtesy of that handle!

Steering was tight and the turning circle amazingly so, in the other sense of 'tight'.

The NEES2 box is a dream and works well in auto, but driving 'manual' is fun. Even if you are in any doubt for gear selection, the dash display keeps

you right especially in a slow down, take off situation. 'Are you in 2 or 3? The display tells you!

Back at the Isuzu depot in 'imperial' Govan, Alan Donaldson confirmed the Isuzu NQR easy shift price at £20,495 as driven. 'A par price for a 7.5 tonner,' he suggested. 'And in addition we offer a three year unlimited mileage warranty, three year RAC cover and good lead times for early delivery ex the European assembly plant in Portugal, even of Euro 3 trucks!'

'In addition we provide the legendary Isuzu Customer Care back-up with 24 hour workshop facilities at Govan on weekdays and half shifts at the weekends,' confirmed Alan.

