



Isuzu 'New Look' D-Max DL40 Double Cab Auto – Road Test

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Kim Henson test drives Isuzu's well-respected D-Max Double Cab (five seater) pick-up.

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In recent years Isuzu has become increasingly prominent in the U.K. pick-up market, with a reputation for strength and reliability endearing buyers. Indeed this inherent durability is key to the company's strategy, and in the firm's own words, they... "focus on making their pick-ups tough, strong and built to go the distance". Isuzu also emphasises that they only make commercial vehicles - although the interior treatment on the higher spec models within their range is much more upmarket than the word 'commercial' suggests.

Isuzu History

Before looking in depth at the latest 'New Look' D-Max pick-up range, it is worth briefly considering Isuzu's long history...

The business was founded in Japan in 1916, but Isuzu arrived in the U.K. in 1987, when the first Trooper model was imported here.

Pick-ups bearing the names TF and Rodeo were introduced in Britain in 1988 and 2004 respectively, the Rodeo becoming one of the best-selling pick-ups of its era.

Fast-forward to 2012 and the D-Max made its U.K. debut, finding favour with farmers and tradespeople due to its reliability and toughness.

In 2017 Isuzu updated the D-Max by introducing new power unit technology, in the form of a cleaner-running, more efficient 1.9 litre diesel engine (hitherto, 2.5 litre), which notably met the latest Euro 6 emission standards without the need for AdBlue additive.

An all-new D-Max arrived here in 2021, incorporating important advances in comfort, refinement and safety, yet at the same time retaining a payload capacity of more than one tonne, and an ability to tow 3.5 tonnes. Network coverage for Isuzu increased too, with more than 110 dealers across the U.K.

The 'New-Look' D-Max of 2023 was revised to include a new front grille, different road wheels and a refreshed cloth/leather seat design.



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It's a multi-award-winning vehicle, impressing many motoring writers for its potent mix of engineering prowess, competent build quality, toughness, good performance and dependability, in addition to upmarket, comfortable interior design.

Looking ahead, Isuzu UK has set a target of selling 10,000 D-Max models here during 2025. Sales during the past few (post-pandemic) years have certainly increased year-on year, from a low of 3,154 in 2020 (down from nearly 5,000 units in each of the years 2018 and 2019), rising to 3,662 in 2021, 4,348 in 2022 and 6,315 in 2023.

In March/April 2024 the first ever D-Max BEV (Battery Electric Vehicle) was showcased in prototype form at the Bangkok International Motor Show. This newcomer is said to have full-time four wheel drive, a one tonne payload and a 3.5 tonnes towing capacity - the same as its diesel stablemates.

The subject of this road test is the 'New Look' DL40 Double Cab (five seater) version of the D-Max (I will explain the model differences), and, like all the others in the line-up, it is powered by a 1.9 litre four cylinder turbo diesel engine, producing 164 PS, plus 360 Nm (265 lb.ft) of torque (between 2,000 and 2,500 rpm). The payload is an impressive 1,120 kg (2,469 lb) and the vehicle, with high and low ratio four wheel drive, has a towing capability of 3.5 tonnes.



Providing peace of mind for potential buyers, all new Isuzu models come with a 125,000 mile/five year warranty, plus five years U.K. and European roadside assistance.

It is interesting that sales (in 2023) were split approximately 80:20, in favour of retail to fleet customers (but fleet purchases are rising), and numbers of examples sold with automatic transmission have increased in recent years, with the ratio around 50:50 between auto and manual transmission versions.



The D-Max line-up

To put the DL40 test vehicle in context, we need to look at the D-Max line-up. This is offered in three ranges, 'Business', 'All-Purpose' and 'Adventure', and with four trim levels, 'Utility', DL20, DL40 and 'V-Cross'.

In brief, the Business range has Utility trim and buyers have a choice of two wheel drive or four wheel drive versions, and there are three cab types - single, extended and double cab.

All D-Max variants, including the Business range, are comprehensively equipped with state of the art safety (and comfort/practicality) systems, including 'Advanced Driver Assist System'. The Euro NCap safety rating of Five Stars has been achieved under new and more rigorous testing. All double cab D-Max variants have eight airbags, including a centre one; single and extended cab models feature seven airbags.

'E-Call' is standard-fit on all D-Max models, and works without a connected phone, to send an emergency SOS call in the event of airbag deployment, or by pushing the SOS button on the overhead console. A 'Multi-Collision Brake' system applies the brakes automatically if the airbags have been activated.

Notable features on all D-Max versions also include (for example) automatic headlamps with high beam assist, automatic screen wipers, speed-sensitive power steering, DAB radio, a stop and start system, Autonomous Emergency Braking, Traffic Sign Recognition, Intelligent Speed Limiter, plus Lane Departure Warning and Prevention.

The speed-sensitive power steering set-up is lighter in operation at low speeds, helping manoeuvres, and heavier at high speeds for increased stability and controllability. There's a gradual transition between the lighter and heavier modes.

The system is designed to transmit a reduced level of impact through the steering wheel from road surface imperfections.



Double cab versions additionally feature Rear Cross Traffic Alert, Blind Spot Monitor and Emergency Lane Keeping.

There's a useful rear differential lock option available for all four wheel drive versions of the Utility range (and this is standard-fit on all the higher specification D-Max variants, above Utility level).

Utility models are deliberately fitted with an easy-to-clean vinyl floor covering and steel wheels, while exterior trim components (including the bumpers, door mirrors and door handles) are made from a hard-wearing black plastic. A hard-wearing 'Tricot' material is used for the upholstery.

Mention should be made of the revised front seats used in the current D-Max models, designed to improve comfort and minimise driver fatigue. Significant highlights include a central panel within the backrest (developed to disperse body pressure evenly and to enhance comfort), more prominent, firmer side bolsters (providing better location and grip when cornering), and a seat cushion made from an Anti-Vibration Elastic Comfort (AVEC) foam, used to minimise vibrations from the road.

Adjustable lumbar support is provided across the model range (manually controlled in single cab and extended cab versions; power-adjustable in double cab variants).

Rear seat occupants have not been forgotten, and the New Look D-Max models have a wheelbase 30 mm (1.18 in) longer than the previous (pre-2021) generation vehicles, allowing a more spacious cabin. In addition, to further improve comfort, shoulder room has increased by 20 mm (0.79 in), 'hip' points are higher and the seat backs now recline further (24 degrees). The 'B' posts have been moved forwards by 25 mm (one inch or so), thus increasing the rear door aperture widths and allowing easier access.

Storage compartments galore have been provided, including up to 10 cup holders, twin gloveboxes and an overhead console with a sunglasses holder.



All the latest D-Max models feature an integrated step built into the rear bumper, making it easier to reach the load compartment.

Last autumn (2023) I briefly sampled a 'Business' range Utility Double Cab, and my verdict was, "A no-nonsense useful pick-up. Built for toughness, durability and cost-effective operation, the D-Max Utility is also a practical five seater and of course capable of carrying and/or heavy loads, on and off-road."

'Business' range prices (including VAT at 20%) start at £29,924 for the Utility 4×2 single cab, rising to £36,044 for the 4×4 Double Cab Auto.

The All-Purpose range includes the DL20 and DL40 models. The designation 'DL' indicates that a rear differential lock is a standard fitting, whereas the '20' and '40' denote the model hierarchy.

Automatic transmission is available on All-Purpose D-Max models, which also feature Adaptive Cruise Control and Lane Keep Assist.

Additional DL20 refinements (i.e. not found on Utility models) include heated front seats, rear parking sensors, front fog lamps, a centre front arm rest, and freshly designed 18 inch aluminium alloy road wheels, plus a black/grey front grille, body colour bumpers and silver coloured door handles.

For the DL20 the seats are upholstered in a more 'premium' woven fabric, of new design. Heated front seats and adjustable front seat head restraints are standard equipment.

DL20 prices (including VAT at 20%) commence at £36,104 (for the Extended Cab model) and rise to £38,804 (Double Cab Auto)

Moving up to a DL40 (like our test car model) brings further sophistication, in the form of (for example) Bi-LED headlamps, LED front fog lamps, daytime running lights, a dark grey/chromed front grille, side steps, two tone 18 inch aluminium alloy wheels, front and



rear parking sensors and a reversing camera. These are also features of the V-Cross model. In each case the reversing camera is built into the tailgate handle, its elevated position providing a large field of vision.

In addition, DL40 buyers benefit from keyless entry (which operates from both sides of the vehicle), a push-button start system, a welcome light, two-tone side steps, updated leather trim (upholstery and steering wheel), and an eight-way electrically-adjustable driver's seat.

Driver information includes a seven-inch multifunction colour touchscreen, compatible with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto.

A dual zone climate control system is installed too, allowing the driver and passenger to set different temperature levels.

DL40 prices (including VAT at 20%) are £40,724 for the Double Cab and £42,524 for the Double Cab Auto, the subject of this road test.

The V-Cross, in fact the only model within the 'Adventure' range, is the top version of the D-Max, and, in Automatic form, is expected to be the best-seller in the line-up. It is externally identifiable by its 'very dark grey' front grille, side steps, door mirrors, and with newly-styled 18 inch aluminium alloy road wheels.

Driver aids on the V-Cross include an automatically-dimming rear view mirror and automatic headlamp levelling.

The high specification interior features a nine inch multifunction colour touchscreen with wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, plus a CD player with eight speakers, leather upholstery and 'V-Cross' branded carpet mats.

Pricing (including VAT @ 20%) for the manual transmission V-Cross is set at £42,524, and for the Auto version is £44,324.



There's a range of seven colours available, and I should add that for all D-Max models, 'Special Paint Finishes' (that is to say, any paint colours except 'Splash White!') cost an additional £720, inclusive of VAT.

Over the last few years the D-Max range has evolved from pure 'workhorse' use to also include 'lifestyle and adventure' aspects, with the higher specification versions of the D-Max especially popular in this role.

Nuts and bolts



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The separate ladder type chassis frame on the current D-Max models has been strengthened and provides greater rigidity than previous generations. This is thanks to an additional cross-member and larger chassis rails, which are up to 34% wider and 14% higher in sections. These upgrades have also improved side impact safety.

The D-Max's impressive credentials include the fact that the pick-up has a payload of more than one tonne, and can tow 3.5 tonnes.

At the heart of the vehicle is a four cylinder turbo diesel motor that is powerful (164 PS), and importantly delivers torque in quantity, and from low engine speeds. In fact it delivers



its maximum of 360 Nm (256 lb.ft) at between 2,000 and 2,500 rpm.

A Stop and Start system automatically cuts the engine when the vehicle is stationary in traffic, and restarts it again when moving off from standstill.

By contrast with earlier D-Max models that didn't need AdBlue additive, for the New Look models, in order to achieve the latest Euro 6D emissions standard, a Selective Catalytic Reduction (NCR) system is employed, requiring AdBlue...

For the New Look models fitted with Isuzu's six speed automatic transmission, the ratio changes are 25 per cent faster than in previous generation D-Max vehicles, providing smoother progress.

Although it is probably academic for most users, our DL40 test vehicle has a claimed top speed of 112 mph, while the zero to 62 mph acceleration time (with the six speed auto gearbox) is 13.0 seconds.

More importantly, the engine is designed to pull strongly throughout the rev range, with prodigious low speed torque to cope with heavy payloads and heavily laden trailers, even in difficult ground conditions.

The rear differential lock, standard on the DL20, DL40 test car and V-Cross models (and optionally available on 4x4 Utility variant), is activated by pushing a button, and is said to be more effective in providing traction than a Limited Slip Differential (LSD). It can only be engaged when '4L' (low ratio) drive mode is engaged and the vehicle speed is below 5 mph. It disengages automatically when the vehicle speed reaches 19 mph.

For off-road use Isuzu has protected underbody components by installing a 1.6 mm thick skid plate at the front of the vehicle, a 1.0 mm steel sump guard (also protecting the transmission and transfer gearbox case) and a 5 mm reinforced resin underbody air deflector.



Four wheel drive D-Max models incorporate three drive modes, engaged by means of a rotary control, located beneath the central touchscreen and within easy reach of the driver. I did not venture off-road with the test vehicle (this is a road test feature rather than an off-road article), but this control operates quickly, easily and logically.



Auto transmission lever, rotary control for drive mode selection, and heating/ventilation 'buttons' all logically positioned and within easy reach of the driver.

'2H' sends drive to the rear wheels only, in a high gear ratio, and is used for on-road motoring, while providing optimum fuel economy.



'4H' provides drive to all four wheels, also in a high gear ratio, and helps progress on slippery surfaces such as grass or mud.

'4L' powers all four wheels using a low gear ratio, for additional traction when driving in extreme off-road terrain.

'Shift-on-the-fly' transfer between these three modes is now much faster, courtesy of a new actuator.

All four wheel drive variants incorporate a trailer sway control, that employs sensors to detect the onset of 'trailer swing', reducing vehicle speed if it identifies swaying.

On all versions, Hill Start Assist and Hill Descent Control are standard-fit, helping to negotiate hills smoothly and safely.

Important changes under the skin for the New Look D-Max models include revised front suspension (with high-mounted upper control arms), to reduce body roll and vibration, and to increase tyre contact with the ground.

The rear suspension has been enhanced too, with increased articulation and revised shock absorber/damper mountings.

The chassis cab mounts have been redesigned to minimise levels of Noise, Vibration and Harshness (NVH) entering the cabin.

Our DL40 test vehicle

The DL40 has an imposing, striking appearance, incorporating some nice touches such as the chromed door handles, front grille trims and door mirrors, which are electrically operated/heated/folding, and incorporate repeater indicator lamps.

I liked the silver-finished and very practical side steps (two tone finish on the DL40), that



aided entry to and exit from the high-mounted cabin.

The special aluminium alloy road wheels appealed to me as well, and I should add that another plus point is that the vehicle comes with a full size spare wheel/tyre as part of its standard-fit equipment.

The pick-up load compartment was protected by an extra-cost canopy on our test car, useful for protecting items being transported. Of course the pick-up bed area is smaller with a double cab, but still usefully large. Good points on the test DL40 included a tailgate damper, and the step built into the rear bumper, for easier access to the load compartment (this step is found on all the D-Max models).





A study of the chassis/underbody gives a good idea of the vehicle's built-in strength, by design, and the underbody protectors, previously mentioned, are welcome for off-road use. Our DL40 was equipped with an additional rear differential lock harness protector too.

I found the interior of our test car was welcoming, spacious and well-appointed, with an upmarket feel and comfortable seating both in the front and rear, with accommodation for up to five adults within its 'double cab' construction. During my time with the vehicle we had four adults aboard for an afternoon drive; all occupants noted the comfortable seats with plenty of head and leg room, and all commented on the high quality look and feel of the upholstery materials used.



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I liked the abundance of stowage spaces, including twin gloveboxes (one of which is lockable) ahead of the front seat passenger and a small lidded tray on top of the facia, plus usefully deep door bins including bottle holders, also centre console storage compartments. The cupholders found throughout the interior (including two built into the rear seat's centre armrest) were welcome and useful too during my road test.

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Another nice touch was the provision of a folding coat hook mounted on the rear of the front passenger seat, which also features an elasticated pocket mounted on the rear of the backrest (the driver's seat also has a similar elasticated pocket).



The steering wheel is adjustable for height and reach, so can easily be positioned to suit the driver.



Transmission controls are straightforward, although a study of the vehicle's comprehensive handbook is worthwhile to help familiarise yourself with the various functions. An interesting aspect (found on automatic transmission versions only) was the inclusion of 'AT Pedal Misapplication Mitigation'; a good idea.

The colour touch screen provided much driver information, and through this the audio system can be controlled. Bluetooth and DAB radio is standard-fit on all D-Max versions, and the number of audio speakers increases in line with the model specification (two in the Utility, four in the DL20, six in the DL40 and eight in the V-Cross).

Curiously, a CD player is found in all versions *except* the DL40. Apparently the reason for this is that the Utility/CD20 models have the CD player as part of Isuzu's lower-spec. radio



system, and the DL40 is the first version in the line-up hierarchy to have an infotainment system, including Apple CarPlay and Android Auto. One of the main reasons why the V-Cross comes with a CD player in the glovebox is that it also serves as a DVD player which plays on the infotainment system (and is one of the benefits of the range-topping V-Cross model).

However, the DL40 (also the DL20 and the V-Cross) has two USB ports; one in the front and one in the rear; the Utility has a single USB port in the front.

The DL40 (also the V-Cross) has a dual zone air conditioning system, allowing the driver and front seat passenger to adjust the settings to suit individual requirements. There's also a separate control panel for rear seat passengers in these models.

I found that on chilly, misty mornings the screens soon cleared after a cold start, and the separate temperature controls were appreciated by my family.

Full marks here in all respects.

Security systems include an alarm with deadlock, and an insurance-approved immobiliser.

On the Road



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As mentioned, during my time with the DL40 I drove it only on tarmac, but I found it to be an eager performer, and it was a good long-distance cruiser on main routes as well as being easy to drive on twisting side roads. It is definitely not a sports car, nor is it intended to be. All the same, it pulls strongly from rest and on the move, and I found that it cruised effortlessly at high road speeds on long runs. At 70 mph on motorways the engine was spinning quietly at a whisker under 2,000 rpm, and at 60 mph, the tacho needle indicated around 1,500 rpm.

Under hard acceleration, and when hill-climbing, the engine is certainly audible but not noisy, and progress was pleasantly quiet in terms of wind and road noise too. On one long journey I undertook, there were very strong side winds buffeting the D-Max, but it was easy to hold the chosen line and I was impressed by this aspect.



I also liked the manner in which the power steering did its job, with minimal assistance at speed but more help during low speed manoeuvres.

The vehicle was also comfortable in the way in which it handled uneven surfaces, and perhaps surprisingly, even when lightly loaded. The large diameter wheels and tyres laughed off potholes and tarmac surface imperfections that would badly affect the ride quality in smaller vehicles. It is designed for carrying and towing heavy loads, but even with just two people on board and an empty load compartment, the vehicle rode well and all occupants commented on its comfort. (The ride quality was smoother still when loaded more heavily).

I found handling and roadholding characteristics to be more positive than might be imagined for a tall, large vehicle - in fact it was easy to control and enjoyable on winding roads.

Of course this is a sizeable vehicle, so finding - and fitting it within - a parking space can be challenging in 'busy' areas, but that's the same with all such pick-ups. I found it easy to manoeuvre, helped greatly by the reversing camera and the compact turning circle (12.5 metres or 41 feet, kerb-to-kerb), and, as mentioned, aided by the excellent power steering assistance. I should add that while the parking spaces in many supermarkets (etc.) are nowadays not large enough for a vehicle like the D-Max, a trip to a local home improvements store proved to be very easy, and their parking spaces easily accommodated the test vehicle in terms of length and width. Well done Homebase...

Driving the D-Max at night was a pleasure, with clear, well-illuminated instruments, and with both dipped and main headlamps, lighting up the left-hand verge very well, in addition to the road ahead.

I appreciated the way that the heating/ventilation settings can be controlled separately from the central touch screen - much safer I feel - via a series of 'buttons' beneath the screen. On chilly mornings the windscreen and cab windows cleared quickly from a cold start, and the



interior of the vehicle soon warmed up.

The windscreen wipers and washers were very effective too, and I liked that the way that the screenwash liquid was fed to the screen via the wiper arms, providing excellent cleaning power and minimal fluid use.

One feature that I did find lacking on the test vehicle was a rear screen wash/wiper system on the (optional) canopy. The canopy itself is a great idea, but during one rainy trip its rear window became muddy quite quickly.

The vehicle's load compartment was very easily accessed, initially by lifting the canopy's upper tailgate/window. Items could then be lifted into or out of the back of the vehicle, with the bumper-mounted integral rear step aiding access.

For loading/unloading large or heavy items, the vehicle's lower main tailgate was easily unclipped and lowered (opening/closing operations were 'damped' on our test DL40), although of course the tailgate then covers the bumper-mounted step.

We used the load bed (equipped with a sturdy protector on our vehicle) to carry a multitude of plastic and cardboard boxes when assisting a family member with house moving operations; the D-Max proved ideal and was capable of carrying a great deal of gear.



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The official 'Combined' fuel consumption figure for our test vehicle DL40 is 30.7 miles per gallon, but in real life use, in mixed road and weather conditions and including some urban motoring as well as long-distance work, we saw an overall average of 34.9 mpg over 418 miles, according to the on-board computer... Very creditable, I feel, for a vehicle of this size.



Clear instrumentation... and the vehicle's trip computer showed an average consumption of 34.9 miles per gallon over 418 miles.

Double Cab Pick-ups and legislation...

An important point is that all versions of the New Look D-Max (including extended and double cab variants) weigh less than 2,040 kg (4,497 lb), and thus are subject to normal passenger car speed limits. The goods vehicle limits applicable to heavier pick-ups mean a speed limit reduction of 10 mph on single and dual carriageways.

VITAL NOTE: The vehicle prices quoted in this feature include VAT. The taxation situation for double cab pick-ups (DCPUs) has been the subject of much debate and was due to



change. However, in a reversal from 19th February 2024 HMRC has stated that double cab pick-ups with a payload of more than one tonne will now continue to be treated as goods vehicles rather than cars. They say, "This will ensure a continued generous and consistent treatment of DCPUs for capital allowances, benefit in kind, and VAT purposes, maintaining simplicity in the tax system."

(Note that double cab pick-ups with a payload of less than one tonne will be treated as cars).

For more information, please consult your Isuzu dealer and visit:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/update-on-hmrc-double-cab-pick-up-guidance>

VERDICT

A likeable, versatile tough vehicle, built for heavy duty work but incorporating a comfortable five-seater interior with an upmarket appearance and feel.

Job done - it does exactly what it says on the tin, and I enjoyed my time with the DL40.



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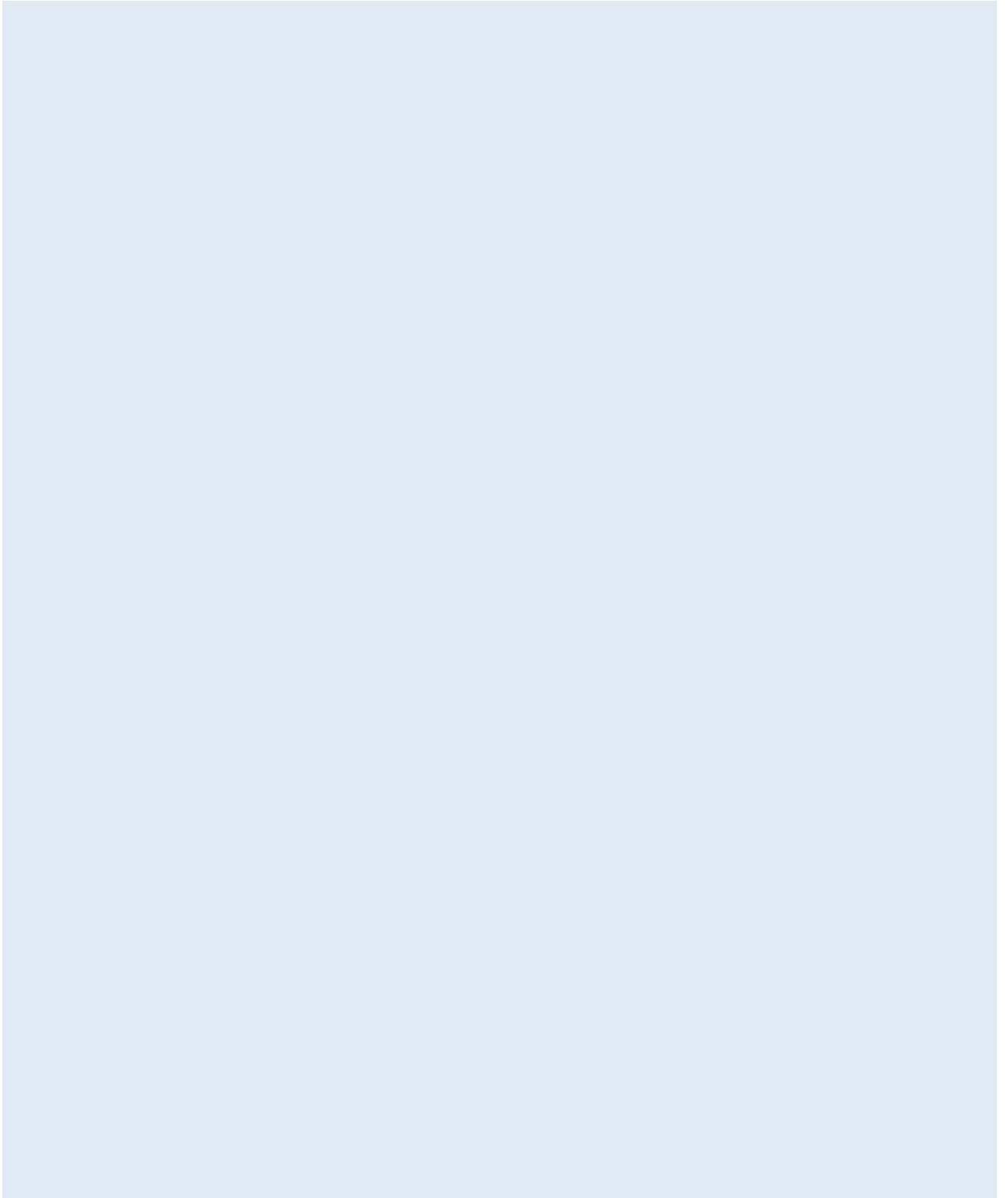
Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

Isuzu D-Max DL40 Double Cab Auto pick-up



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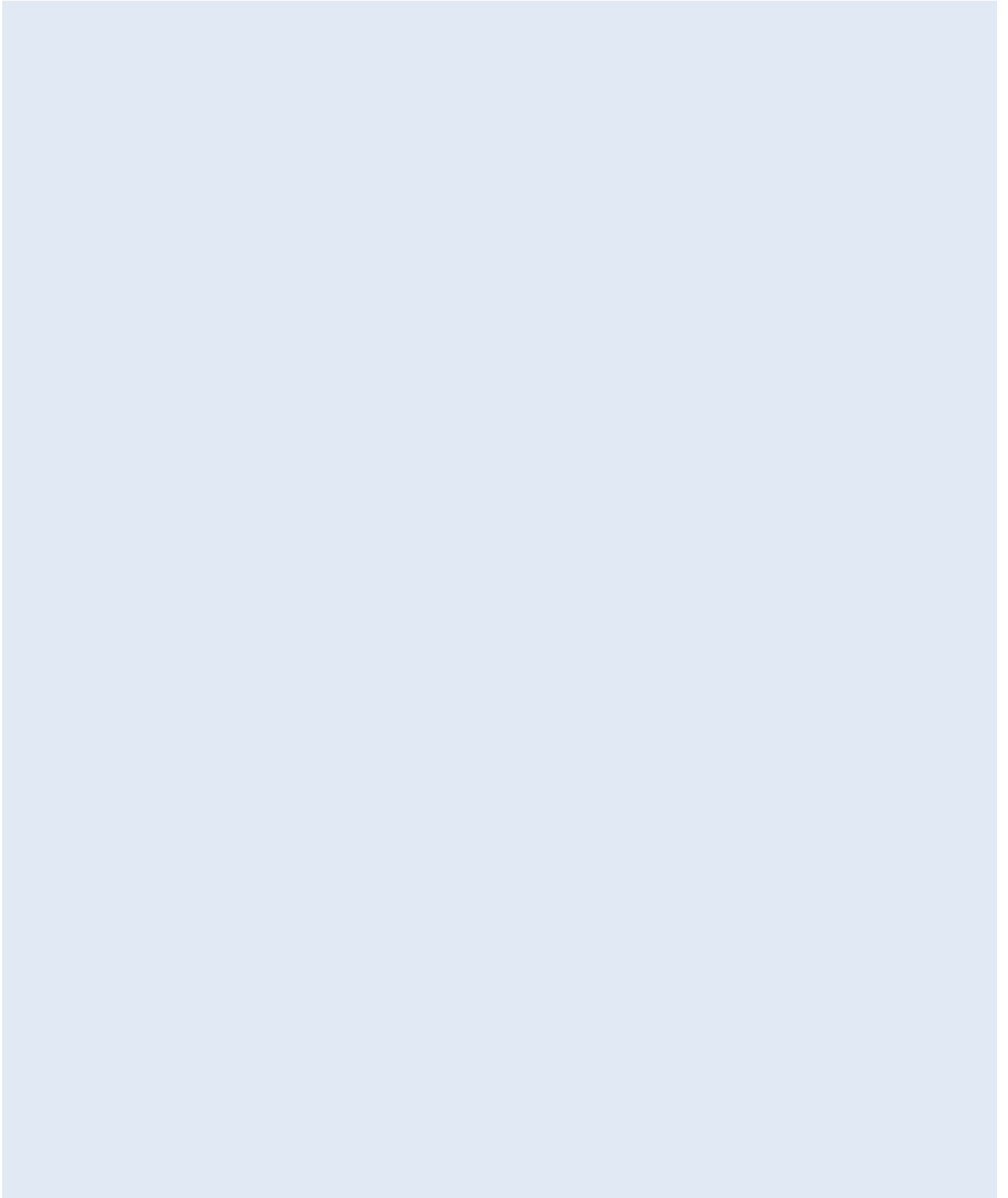
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Total 'on the road' vehicle cost before extras: £42,523.80. This figure includes:

The basic price of the vehicle, at £34,424, add delivery and number plates, totalling £700, making £35,124, plus VAT at 20% on these items, £7,024.80, making a total so far of £42,148.80, plus DVLA first registration fee of £55 (VAT exempt), and first year's road tax of £320 (VAT exempt). Total altogether £42,523.80.

Plus: Onyx Black paint £720 (including 20 per cent VAT)

(Please also see main text for latest government information on taxation on double cab pick-ups, at April 2024).



Fuel tank capacity: 16.7 Imperial gallons

Projected mileage range on a full tank at our overall consumption figure: 566 miles

CO2 Emissions, WLTP: 241 g/km.

Warranty: 125,000 miles/five years

Annual road tax: £320

Dimensions:

Length: 5,270 mm (17.29 ft)

Width: 1,870 mm (6.14 ft)

Height: 1,790 mm (5.87 ft)

Wheelbase: 3,125 mm (10.25 ft)

Ground clearance (rear axle): 240 mm (9.45 in)

Kerb weight: 2,010 kg (4,431 lb)

Wheels and Tyres: 18 x 7.5J wheels, shod with 265/60R18 tyres

Load bed dimensions:

Length: 1,495mm (58.86in)

Width: 1,530mm (60.23 in)



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Depth: 490mm (19.29in)

Payload: 1,120 kg (2,469 lb)

Towing capacity: 3.5 tonnes