

This Week's Briefing

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The Editor's View

As the discussion about the merits or otherwise of electric vehicles in fleet rumbles on, it is becoming increasingly obvious that take-up of these vehicles for business users is going to be muted at best. After all, even if a user seldom does more than 50 miles per day for work, that user may well want to travel a few hundred miles at the weekend – any why shouldn't they, bearing in mind that they pay a substantial amount in BIK tax to do just that. The front-end price and uncertainty over residual values may also prevent a large-scale take-up of electric powered cars and vans. We believe that the future of environmentally-friendly motoring lies much more in the new crop of hybrid vehicles which is about to be launched. Toyota is about to reveal a new Plug-In Prius which can be run as an electric car in town, while assisted by a petrol engine for longer runs. With the same range as a conventional car and the prospect of nearly 129 miles per gallon on offer, surely vehicles like this are more likely to succeed than pure electric-powered ones.

Fleet file

Company cars regaining importance, says new GE Capital research

THE company car has rapidly regained importance to businesses during the last two years, according to the latest quarterly Company Car Trends research from GE Capital, Fleet Services.

The perceived importance of the company car is now rated on aggregate 8.7 out of 10 (where 10 is highly important) for essential car users compared to 8.0 in Q3 of 2010 and 7.2 in Q3 of 2009 by surveyed fleet managers. Before the recession, in Q3 of 2007, the response was as high as 9.7.

Interestingly, 45% of the 250 fleet decision makers responding to the survey today give a maximum score of 10 in answer to this question while 85% opt for a rating of 8.0 or above.

The results for non-essential users are almost equally marked. In answer to the same question, the latest aggregate score is 5.7, compared to 5.1 in Q3 of 2010 and 4.7 in Q3 of 2009.

Gary Killeen, commercial director for GE Capital, Fleet Services UK, said that the perceived importance question provided an impression of how employers viewed the company car as a business tool and as a benefit to employees in today's tougher economic and legislative environment.

He explained: ‘What the research indicates is that since the technical end of the recession towards the end of 2009, the company car has become quite markedly more important to UK employers and their employees.

‘There are a number of reasons for this, we believe. Key amongst them is a recognition that the company car remains the best business transport solution available at a time when costs are being closely scrutinised and achieving real world results is essential.

‘Also, in an uncertain economic environment, employees have come to value the company car ever more as a part of their remuneration package.

‘It is a timely reminder of the key contribution that the company car makes to business life in the UK.’

LeasePlan supplies Philips’ first electric vehicle

LEASEPLAN has supplied global health and well-being company Philips with its first electric Nissan Leaf vehicle in the UK.

Building on LeasePlan and Philips’ existing partnership, the Leaf will be the first fully-electric vehicle in the company’s fleet. The car will be used as an onsite pool car, available to all employees with a license, for local journeys.

Phillips is also installing a charging post at its UK head office in association with easit, a sustainable transport initiative. The post will operate as part of a reciprocal use agreement being pioneered by easit and leading employers across Surrey, Crawley and the Thames Valley.

Matt Dyer, commercial director, LeasePlan, said: ‘This ground-breaking vehicle fits well with their - and our - commitment to greener fleet. This represents just one way in which LeasePlan is helping our customers to better understand the value of electric vehicles in commercial fleets.’

Jonathan Coles, HR director, Philips Healthcare, said: ‘We are pleased to be leading the way in electric vehicle implementation in the Surrey area. As a company with a heritage in innovation, we are always keen to try the latest technologies. We will be interested to hear the thoughts of our employees about whether this is something the company will further embrace in the future.’

Picture caption: (From left) Jonathan Coles, HR director, Philips; Dawn Devonshire, account director, LeasePlan; Mel Mehmet, chief executive, easit; Nicolas Bedard, UK fleet manager, Philips.

Cobra’s new parking sensor range helps fleets increase safety

COBRA has launched its new parking sensor range as data from the Association of British Insurers reveals that 17% of all road accidents in the UK involve reversing.

Additionally, Health and Safety Executive figures reveal that 25% of all deaths involving vehicles at work in the UK occur as a result of a reversing manoeuvre and a third of all reported freight transport collisions occur when a vehicle is reversing.

The new Park Master A0300 parking sensor range is Cobra’s latest innovation, offering, it is claimed, OE production line quality and finish with the added benefit of a totally flush mount. The systems are said to be suitable for most cars, motor homes and commercial vehicles.

‘Commercial vehicle drivers are constantly under pressure to reverse in difficult operating conditions, and Cobra’s Park Master range has been expertly designed to protect both drivers and pedestrians, while also safeguarding vehicles from costly damage and vehicle down time,’ said Andrew Smith, managing director, Cobra UK.

'The new Cobra Park Master range is well placed to take advantage of this growing demand to make vehicles and their drivers safer, while also helping commercial vehicle fleet operators meet their duty of care obligations, and protect their vehicle and future insurance premiums.'

Leasing increases in popularity

INCREASING numbers of motorists are turning to long-term car leases. According to the latest figures from the Finance & Leasing Association, the trade body for the motor finance industry, in Q2 2011 the value of leases for private cars rose by 55% compared to the same period last year.

More than £100 million was granted to customers leasing cars in Q2 2011, compared with just £66 million in Q2 2010. Although, the volume of leasing in the retail motor finance market is small, it is growing fast.

Dealer motor finance accounts for 57% of all new private car purchases and is also popular in the used car market. Last year 500,000 new cars and 635,000 used cars were bought using motor finance.

Commenting on Q2's motor finance figures, Paul Harrison, the FLA's head of motor finance, said: 'Almost three out of five motorists buying a new car use dealer finance. While personal contract purchase (PCP) and hire purchase deals remain popular, increasing numbers of people are turning to leasing as an affordable finance option.'

'Traditionally, leasing has been more popular with businesses, but many manufacturers and independent finance companies are offering new and improved leasing options to private customers.'

'If insurance and servicing are included, it can make financial sense to lease, particularly for motorists who like to change their car every few years. Our independent website www.FinancingYourCar.org.uk has details on all the different finance options available for buying a car.'

Fleet Hero Awards celebrate UK's greenest fleets

THE UK's greenest fleets and their suppliers will once again be recognised at the Energy Saving Trust Fleet Hero Awards.

The prestigious awards celebrate public and private organisations that are successfully reducing their fuel bills and lowering carbon footprints through fleet travel and transport policies. They also highlight companies that supply fuel and cost-saving products or services to car and van fleets.

Nigel Underdown, head of transport advice for the Energy Saving Trust, said: 'Road transport accounts for over a fifth of the UK's total greenhouse gas emissions and businesses are in an ideal position to make a positive impact. We find that organisations taking action to reduce fleet emissions are actually saving money as well as helping our nation meet its sustainability goals. These organisations deserve to be celebrated and honoured as Fleet Heroes.'

The awards are open to fleets of any size in the public and private sectors. The diverse range of previous winners includes construction contractors, NHS trusts, automotive manufacturers, government departments and agencies, courier companies and local councils.

The 11 categories are: Best Public Sector; Best Private Sector; Innovation in Fleet Management; Innovation in Car and Van manufacture; Innovation in Services and Systems; Industry Supplier; Leadership; Smarter Driving; Grey Fleet Management; Business Mileage Management; and Van Fleet Management.

Applying is straightforward and quick, initially requiring only a 250 word entry outlining why your organisation should win. The deadline for initial applications is Tuesday 20th September 2011.

Those applicants who qualify to enter the second and final round of judging will be notified by Tuesday 27th September 2011 and invited to submit a second, more detailed application by Friday October 14. To receive an application form, email your name, job title and organisation to fleetheroes@est.org.uk. For further information on the categories and judging process, visit

<http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/business/Business/Transport-advice/Fleet-Hero-Awards-20112>.

Seminars to focus on bereaved families

TWO seminars for traffic FLOs working with families bereaved or seriously injured in road crashes are to be held in London and Wakefield this autumn.

Organised by Brake, the road safety charity, and supported by the Association of Chief Police Officers and the Police Federation, the *Police family liaison following a road death or serious injury* seminars will showcase FLO best practice and explain voluntary sector services for road crash victims.

Sponsored by Fentons, Irwin Mitchell, Lyons Davidson and Pannone solicitors, the seminars will include details of services which focus on families' emotional and practical needs and help families to understand criminal justice system procedures, thus leaving FLOs free to focus on their role of helping families to understand and engage with police procedures effectively.

The seminar is a low-cost opportunity for professional development, and confirmed speakers include RoadPeace, and Frances Bourne, Hertfordshire co-ordinator for the Road Victims Trust who will look at some of the services offered to road crash victims. There will also be academic speakers discussing how families experience grief, sessions from ACPO and the National Policing Improvement Agency and FLO best practice case studies.

For a full list of speakers and more information go to www.suddendeath.org

Tracker sees 90% of stolen cars recovered

THE first half of 2011 saw Tracker recover nearly £7.5 million worth of stolen cars, resulting in 64 arrests across the UK. Whilst less than half of reported stolen cars are ever recovered by the police, the success rate radically improves if a Tracker device is installed. Well over 90% of stolen vehicles fitted with a Tracker device are returned to their owners and 80% of these are recovered within 24 hours.

Stephen Doran, managing director for Tracker, said: 'Being a victim of car theft, particularly if it involved a home burglary or assault, can be very traumatic.

'But the impact it can have on your finances and disruption to your everyday life can be as equally distressing. Not all insurance policies automatically include hire car cover, and those that do are often for a limited period only. Unless you hire a car at your own expense, your daily routine, such as getting to work, the school run, grocery shopping, all the things we take for granted when we have a car, will become a significant inconvenience.'

Grey fleet drivers could mean risky business for employers

EMPLOYEES across the UK could be leaving themselves and their companies exposed if they fail to understand their responsibility when using their own cars on company business.

That's the finding from leading telematics provider Trimble, which, in a recent survey, found six out of ten respondents were unaware of the fact that they needed to insure their car for business travel if they ever drive their own cars on behalf of their company.

There is a growing trend for firms to operate a grey fleet, as it is often referred to, as the cost of managing a fleet of company vehicles becomes unsustainable for many UK organisations. However, the legal implications are not clear.

Managing director of Trimble Fleet Solutions in Europe, Andrew Yeoman, said: 'It is easy to see why opting for a 'grey fleet' is an attractive solution as it mitigates the expense and resources of running a company fleet. Our survey showed that employees don't fully understand their obligation in this area and often employers are also unaware of the impact on them.'

Vikki Woodfine, a senior solicitor at business law firm DWF, understands the potential dangers facing those organisations not managing their grey fleet.

She said: 'If an employer sees its employees' expense and fuel reports, the company should be fully aware of which employees are using their own vehicle for business travel. You can't just pay for an employees' fuel

and then abscond from further responsibilities. There could be more at stake financially than just the cost of insurance if there is an accident. For example, there is the cost of an absent employee and the damage that could be caused to your business reputation.

'An organisation could also be at risk of a potential civil claim if, for example, an employee is involved in a serious collision. Claimants may look to the employer in the claim,' said Woodfine. 'Ultimately, employers have a duty of care towards all employees making work-related trips regardless of who owns the vehicle.'

With employees and employers both needing to be more informed, there are simple procedures that can be implemented to start to address any potential issue.

Yeoman said: 'At the bare minimum employers need to check an employees' driving licence, their MOT and verify that they have the correct insurance for business travel. These checks at least provide a foundation – but to truly take responsibility for their grey fleet the next step is to see how else they can manage their risk and their employees' safety while out on the road.

'Telematics is already used by millions of fleet vehicles around the world. The technology enables our customers to assess their road risk, identify poor driver behaviour and then train those drivers to be safer on the road. For those companies using grey fleets, using telematics in this way is certainly a potential approach for them to help ensure that drivers driving on the business' behalf are doing it in the safest way possible, protecting both themselves and their employees.'

French manufacturers join Tyresafe

PEUGEOT and Citroën have demonstrated their on-going commitment to road safety by becoming the newest members of TyreSafe, taking the number of vehicle manufacturer members up to 15.

As members, they will seek to educate all of their existing customers about the importance of correct tyre maintenance, utilising both their own individual and TyreSafe campaign materials.

Welcoming the news, Stuart Jackson, chairman, TyreSafe, said: 'Car and passenger safety has always been a high priority for Peugeot and Citroën, as demonstrated by their tyre pressure monitoring systems, customer education programmes and free tyre safety checks.

'As well as this, they take an active role in informing drivers about the capabilities of their vehicles. However, they will now be able to go even further spreading the tyre safety message at their UK dealerships, among other places, with our TyreSafe literature, which is packed full of sensible advice for motorists.

'We also look forward to working with them in the future, ultimately to the benefit of all road users. Tyre safety is a message that cannot be ignored, so it's great news to have such influential industry players joining our ever-expanding team.'

TyreSafe is the UK's leading tyre safety organisation and its members include a wide range of companies and organisation concerned with improving road safety such as tyre and car manufacturers, through to independent retailers, equipment suppliers and public bodies.

David Higgins, Peugeot parts and service director said: 'We are delighted to join TyreSafe and help spread the tyre safety message to our customers and staff alike. By combining our commitment to developing technological safety innovations and this key education platform, we hope we can make a positive contribution and reduce the number of road casualties that occur each year.'

Model update

Prius Plug-In hybrid set for Frankfurt debut

TOYOTA will debut the production version of the Prius Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicle (PHEV) at the Frankfurt Motor Show on September 15.

The new Prius Plug-in Hybrid features a new, more compact lithium-ion battery which has been developed to meet Toyota's standards for reliability. The new battery offers extended EV (electric power only) range,

enabling the Prius PHEV to achieve fuel efficiency of 128.4mpg and to lower CO₂ emissions to 49 g/km, almost half the standard Prius.

While some debate the relative merits of electric cars, the new Prius Plug-in Hybrid claims to offer drivers the best of both worlds – extended EV driving range for shorter journeys in towns and cities, while the hybrid petrol engine gives the car long range capability and the low fuel consumption of the standard Prius.

The new Prius Plug-in Hybrid becomes the flagship of the Prius range, a showcase for new technologies and further advances in hybrid technology. In 2012 it will join an expanded Toyota hybrid range consisting of the Prius, the British-built Auris hybrid, the new, seven-seat Prius+ and the new Yaris hybrid.

New Korando leads SsangYong's UK return

SSANGYONG is set to relaunch in the UK next month with the new Korando crossover leading the charge with a price tag from £16,995 on-the-road.

The manufacturer is claiming that the all-new Korando gives best in class value compared with cars such as the Hyundai ix35, Kia Sportage, Mitsubishi ASX and Nissan Qashqai.

Promising the practicality of a 4x4/SUV and the accessibility of a family hatchback, Korando, Paul Williams, chief executive of the UK importer, SsangYong Motor UK, said: 'Korando is a great value proposition, and arrives in the highly competitive crossover market at absolutely the right time.

'Very keenly priced, a comprehensive list of standard equipment, excellent towing capability and thanks to its long wheelbase a spacious and airy interior, Korando is the clever choice for families and those who tow a caravan, horsebox or trailer.'

The Korando comes with a choice of trim levels, two gearboxes and the option of either front or four wheel drive.

All models are powered by a 173 bhp 2.0 litre four cylinder turbo diesel engine producing 360 Nm of torque with emissions from only 157 g/km.

The Korando has on demand four wheel drive and a unique in segment all wheel drive lock mode to deliver a 50/50 spread of torque between the front and rear wheels at speeds up to 25 mph, essential for when low speed traction and control is needed such as when driving up a slippery track or off a sodden field.

With a choice of six speed manual or automatic transmissions, buyers can opt for S or ES trim in their front wheel drive Korando, or top of the range EX specification in four wheel drive models.

The entry level variant comes equipped with cruise control, ESP with Hill Start Assist and reverse parking sensors as standard, while the ES and EX come with a sunroof, climate control, leather upholstery and heated front and rear seats.

The company's present network of 50 dealers is to be expanded to 65, selling a range of models in addition to Korando - the 4x4 Rexton, seven-seat Rodius MPV and Rexton commercial vehicle.

Honda Civic gets cleaner and more powerful engine

HONDA has given the new 2012 Civic a boost with improvements to the 2.2 litre i-DTEC engine

The 150 PS engine - a 10 PS power boost over the outgoing engine - with torque of 350 Nm now has emissions of 110 g/km - a drop of 29 g/km over the outgoing model.

The i-DTEC engine has received a number of enhancements in the quest for lower emissions. The oil flow through the engine has been carefully managed to reduce circulation loss, while engine materials and components have been revised to reduce friction. A 5 g/km reduction was also achieved with the addition of Idle

Stop (start/stop) technology.

The new Honda Civic makes its debut at next month's Frankfurt Motor Show.

Defender gets new Euro 5 engine

A NEW EU5 2.2-litre diesel engine replaces the EU4 2.4-litre diesel for the Land Rover Defender, bringing greater levels of performance and refinement to the 2012 model. The smaller capacity engine delivers the same power, torque and economy as its outgoing unit but makes this the cleanest Land Rover Defender yet produced. In EU5 markets, the new engine comes with a diesel particulate filter (DPF) to ensure the lowest possible levels of regulated emissions.

A new, full acoustic engine cover replaces the previous splash cover, reducing radiated engine noise and improving driving refinement. Meeting EU5 regulations, the engine delivers lower levels of the regulated emissions, NOx, CO and HC thanks to an improved combustion system and sophisticated engine management system.

Despite the smaller capacity and reduced emissions, the new engine produces the same power, 122bhp@3,500rpm and torque of 265lb-ft@2,000rpm, as the outgoing 2.4-litre engine. Performance remains similar too, though the top speed has been raised to 90mph compared to 82mph for the previous version. CO₂ emissions on the combined cycle are consistent at 266g/km for the 90 and 295g/km for the 110 and 130.

The GFT MT 82 six-speed gearbox has been retained for 2012 with its high top gear for cruising and enhanced low-speed crawl capability. The lower first gear offers low crawl speed making towing on-road and off-road easier. The low-down engine torque also helps in-gear acceleration and the tall sixth gear ensures excellent real-world cruising, refinement and fuel economy. Ground gears in both the gearbox and transfer box help contribute to the refinement of the transmission.

The 2012 Defender is available from £20,995 on the road and will be on-sale in the UK from November 2011.

Experimental launch for Vauxhall

VAUXHALL is set to unveil an experimental vehicle alongside the Astra GTC and Zafira Tourer at next month's Frankfurt Show.

Little is known about the vehicle but Vauxhall promises it will explore a new interpretation of driving fun and surprise with its level of innovation, while emphasising the company's passion for driver-focused vehicles.

This passion is also evident in the Zafira Tourer which is expected early next year. A new range of engines and a redesign of the clever Flex7 seating system seen in the original Zafira means it'll target families who want a people carrier with a sporting touch, i.e. those who usually buy an S-Max.

The Astra GTC is due in UK showrooms in November and will stand out thanks to its rakish looks. Its high-performance front suspension twinned with a range of petrol and diesel engines promises improved performance.

Vauxhall will also be showing its electric vehicle, the Ampera, which will be available from April next year. Vauxhall claims the Ampera is unique because it combats the range anxiety that puts most people off buying electric cars in case it runs out of charge and leaves them stranded.

It can drive 25-50 miles using its batteries before an on board petrol-powered generator kicks in and provides electricity for a further 310 miles.

New three-door version for Picanto

FOLLOWING on from the recent launch of the all-new Picanto city car, Kia is introducing a three-door version to the line-up for the first time since the model appeared in 2004. The three-door, with a new range of trim levels, will go on sale in the UK from September 1.

The three-door Picanto has a sporty character while still managing to deliver the same upgrades as the more family-focused five-door: stronger performance with lower fuel consumption and CO₂ emissions, the safety and luxury features of a large car without an higher price tag and practicality within a compact package. The dimensions of the three- and five-door Picanto are identical in order to ensure they enjoy the same levels of interior space and crash safety.

New doors, rear panels and glass aft of the A-pillar give the three-door Picanto a fresh appearance, accentuated by the rising belt line that slices through the door handle on each side and the aerodynamically shaped side sill mouldings. Unique alloy wheels on the upper two trim versions are other distinguishing features of the three-door Picanto.

Hyundai launches sub-100g/km i20 Blue

FOLLOWING on from the i10 Blue launched at the beginning of the year, Hyundai has now added another sub-100g/km CO₂ model to its range – the i20 Blue. With emissions of 98g/km CO₂, it is the lowest emitting vehicle in Hyundai UK's product line-up.

The i20 Blue is based on the current i20 Comfort trim level mated to the 1.4 CRDi 90 bhp engine and is priced at £13,195 OTR.

To achieve the sub-100g/km CO₂ figures, the i20 Blue has the following Blue Drive technologies: Intelligent Stop & Go (ISG), low rolling resistance tyres, rear suspension under cover and rear wheel deflector. With these additional features, the i20 Blue achieves a 12% reduction in CO₂ emissions (compared with the current 1.4 CRDi 90PS Style i20 model) from 111g/km down to just 98g/km.

The 1.4 CRDi Euro V compliant four-cylinder engine achieves 76.4mpg combined. This is a 14% improvement on a combined cycle when compared to the i20 1.4 CRDi 90bhp Style model. The i20 Blue also comes with 15in alloy wheels, Bluetooth connectivity with voice recognition, electric heated and folding door mirrors, electric front and rear windows, steering wheel audio controls, USB and aux connections air conditioning and remote central locking.

On-sale now, the Hyundai i20 Blue comes with a five year Triple Care package, which includes a five-year, unlimited mileage, manufacturer backed warranty, five years of roadside assistance and five years of annual vehicle health checks.

Fiat Bravo adds MyLife version

THE Fiat Bravo MyLife is the latest car to be included in Fiat's feature model collection of well-equipped, high value versions. Based on the range's Active trim, the new Bravo MyLife is powered by Fiat's MultiJet 105bhp diesel engine.

The list of standard equipment includes 16-in alloy wheels, Blue&Me entertainment and communication system, leather steering wheel with audio controls, ESP stability control, air conditioning, electric front windows and driver, passenger and side airbags. The Fiat Bravo 1.6 16v MultiJet 105 MyLife costs £17,500 OTR.

Meanwhile, the Bravo Active version has been given a more stylish look with the help of a special gloss-black finish B pillar, new piano black upper and lower front grille, chrome upper front grille frame and chrome door handles. Fiat Bravo Active pricing starts at £15,200 OTR for the 1.4 Active 90hp, rising to £17,200 OTR for the 1.6 16v MultiJet 105 Active Eco.

Jaguar concept set for Frankfurt Show debut

THE Jaguar C-X16 production concept will make its global debut at the Frankfurt Motor Show on September 13.

Designed by the same team that produced the Jaguar XJ, XF and XK – headed by Jaguar director of design Ian Callum – the C-X16 concept is a precursor to future Jaguar sports cars that will aim to set new class benchmarks in design, vehicle dynamics and technology.

As the concept neared completion Callum commented: 'Great Jaguars have always been beautiful, innovative and have looked firmly to the future. The finished C-X16 concept has the potential to do these things while retaining the ability to surprise, to excite and invigorate.'

Adrian Hallmark, global brand director, Jaguar Cars added: 'Jaguar has set in place bold, ambitious plans for the future. This production concept demonstrates the depth of design and engineering ability we have within Jaguar to make these plans come to life – I look forward to sharing this latest, exciting step at the Frankfurt Motor Show.'

Manufacturer news

Mazda model availability helps fleets beat waiting list nightmare

MAZDA is looking to secure significant new corporate business as fleet managers and company car drivers benefit from across the range model availability in preference to waiting for up to five months or even longer for a new vehicle from a rival marque.

Vehicle waiting lists at some manufacturers are typically an average 10-14 weeks with some model order times stretching to five months and even longer meaning that delivery of a new car ordered today may not be until Christmas 2011 or even into 2012.

For fleets the lack of availability of a new company car can prove costly, while for drivers such delays are frustrating. The options facing businesses are typically to defleet on schedule and then hire a vehicle for the interim period or extend the replacement cycles which, for outright purchase fleets means a lower second hand value on the current vehicle or, for leased fleets, paying to extend the contract.

However, Mazda can point to a number of reasons for being able to meet fleet customer orders without significant delays. These include:

- A flexible UK dealer allocation process due to the establishment of a 'fleet vehicle sold order pot' programme, which key dealers use to meet corporate demand within 10-14 days of orders being placed. Mazda and their dealers forecast the model mix they expect to be most popular with fleets based on market knowledge and order specification history. The vehicles are then manufactured and held centrally on the dockside at Zeebrugge in Belgium. When fleet orders are taken, dealers 'pull' cars from the 'pot' and deliver to customers within two weeks.
- The recent addition to the Mazda range of the fleet-specific Mazda6 'Business Line' model for which order books are now open with the first deliveries due to coincide with the September registration plate change.

Mazda fleet and remarketing director Steve Jelliss said: 'We have good availability on all mainstream models. However, our diesel models are particularly popular with fleets and company car drivers for a number of reasons but notably a combination of strong whole life costs, high specification, competitive list price and low emissions figure which deliver financial benefits to managers and wallet-friendly benefit-in-kind tax bills to drivers, whilst also delivering a fun-to-drive experience.'

Among the most popular Mazda models in the corporate sector are the Mazda3 1.6D five-door TS2 with emissions of 117 g/km and the Mazda6 2.2D 5dr TS 129 PS with emissions of 138 g/km.

Further interest in the Mazda range has been boosted with the addition of the Mazda6 'Business Line' model, which debuted at the recent Company Car in Action event.

Jelliss said: 'The model attracted significant interest from fleet decision-makers attending the event and our corporate sales team is busy following up leads which we fully expect to materialise into orders.'

The 'Business Line' model is a single, fleet focused Mazda6 hatchback available with a 2.2 litre diesel engine producing 129 PS, priced at £18,300 on-the-road. Emitting 138 g/km, the car sits in the 20% benefit-in-kind tax bracket for 2011/12.

Mazda anticipates that it will sell approximately 500 'Business Line' models in the remainder of 2011. Annual sales are expected to total around 1,000 units.

Jelliss said: 'With immediate availability and an anticipated monthly contract hire rate lower than significant rival models, the Mazda6 'Business Line' will be well positioned versus its competition, including the premium badge cars. Given its tax rating, specification levels and the fact that there are long waiting lists for many alternatives from other manufacturers we are anticipating strong demand for the car.'

He concluded: 'All of these factors put Mazda in a strong position to meet fleet and company car driver expectations and sustain and grow corporate sales across the UK.'

SsangYong returns to market after two-year gap

SSANGYong Motor UK, the new importer for Korean SsangYong cars, has hired Steve Gray as marketing and communications director ahead of the brand's reintroduction and launch of its first crossover vehicle, the Korando.

The SsangYong brand is returning to Britain after a two year absence and will spearhead its marketing focus on the new car to compete against the Hyundai ix35, Kia Sportage, Mitsubishi ASX and Nissan Qashqai.

'Having worked across Land Rover, Daihatsu, Chrysler, Jeep and Dodge, Steve has an automotive marketing pedigree that is absolutely tailored to SsangYong's current position and the job we have to do,' said Paul Williams, CEO of SsangYong Motor UK. 'I can't think of anyone better suited to successfully re-position the brand and launch the new car.'

Working for TKM Automotive (which became part of Inchcape), Gray successfully brought the Chrysler and Jeep brands to the UK in 1992 and became marketing director of Chrysler Group, then part of DaimlerChrysler UK.

'This is a tremendous opportunity. We are effectively a new company launching a new car into a new, fast growing segment for the brand, which means we can embrace all the latest tools in the digital toolbox without being constrained by convention,' said Gray.

The first shipment of cars arrives shortly and Korando goes on sale in September.

Light commercial vehicles

Iveco gears up to launch new Daily

IVECO is preparing to launch the latest evolution of its light commercial vehicle range with the Daily and EcoDaily entering UK showrooms in November.

In its latest form, the Daily boasts new engines which offer more power, combined with refinements both economically and ecologically.

Taking pride of place in the range will be FPT Industrial's new 3.0 litre Euro 5 diesel engine, which introduces a class-leading power output of 205 bhp and 470 Nm of torque.

For new Daily models falling into the heavy duty category and all natural gas versions, the EEV (Enhanced Environmentally friendly Vehicle) certification remains, ensuring the models meet the most stringent European exhaust emission standard available.

For lighter models, the FPT Industrial 2.3 litre engine benefits from an increase in engine torque to 320 Nm and a new Multijet II multi-event fuel injection system that optimises the combustion process, bringing benefits in terms of lower engine noise, fuel consumption and tail-pipe emissions.

All diesel engines will continue to use an enhanced EGR (exhaust gas recirculation) system with improved control to ensure accurate recirculated gas distribution among the engine cylinders and a DPF (diesel particulate filter) as standard.

Safety enhancements on new Daily include daytime running lights and a new fog light cornering feature to ensure that drivers can see and be seen in even the worst driving conditions possible.

Standard equipment will include the new ESP 9 safety system with active sensors and comprises ABS (anti-lock brakes), EBD (electronic brake force distribution), ASR (traction control), MSR (engine speed management to control engine over-run braking), ESP (stability control), HBA (hydraulic brake assist) to ensure emergency braking is as effective as possible, Hill Holder, LAC (load adaptive braking control), TSM (trailer sway mitigation), HRB (hydraulic rear wheel brake boost), HFC (hydraulic brake fade compensation), RMI (roll movement intervention) and ROM (roll over mitigation).

New Daily will retain full coverage from 3.5 to 7.0 tonnes gross vehicle weight. This allows for a payload of up to 4.7 tonnes and, for van models, a loading volume of up to 17.2m³.

Full details of the UK model line-up and specifications will be made available closer to the launch date.

Cluttered cabs are a magnet for criminals

THE Fuelcard Company is warning fleet drivers to keep their van dashboards clutter-free to avoid becoming a target for petty thieves.

In a survey of 2,000 fleet personnel, a third of drivers had fast food packaging on their dashboards, while 24% had cuddly toys and other accessories and 21% had newspapers.

Fleet maintenance expert Fleet Support Group (FSG) has recently reported that the interior condition of some employees' vehicles is so appalling that many garages have refused to carry out work until the rubbish has been removed.

Jakes de Kock, sales and marketing director at The Fuelcard Company, said such untidiness could result in fleet drivers being targeted by opportunist criminals looking to steal fuel cards, satellite navigation systems and mobile phones, as such items are less likely to be missed in a cluttered cab.

He said: 'We already know that freight crime is on the rise so it is imperative fleet drivers do everything in their power to reduce the likelihood of becoming a target. An untidy vehicle can make it more difficult to identify whether something has been taken, giving criminals time to fraudulently purchase fuel and withdraw money. If spotted straight away, fuel cards can be stopped immediately preventing a petty crime turning into a financial disaster which could cost your company thousands. Fortunately for customers of The Fuelcard Company, we offer zero liability optional cover on all our fuel cards.'

Thefts from heavy goods vehicles have almost doubled since last year, rising to 448 thefts over a three month period in 2011, compared to 244 over the same period in 2010 as previously reported by The Fuelcard Company.

The survey, conducted by Autoglass, also revealed that 33% of van drivers and 34 percent of truck drivers have had between 11 and 30 near misses in the past year due to obscured views caused by dashboard clutter.

De Kock said not only does an untidy vehicle create a serious accident risk, but it can also affect the resale value of company vehicles. He said: 'For fleet drivers, their cab is effectively their office and therefore the same health and safety rules should apply. This survey reveals a shocking number of near misses and fleet managers need to address the issue of rubbish in vehicles as a priority.'

'Treating company cars, vans and trucks like litter bins will also take its toll the condition of the vehicle and such abuse will affect resale values,' he added.

Residual value update

Fleet and lease residual values come under more pressure

THE fleet and lease sector has experienced more price pressure, according to the latest market analysis from BCA.

Fleet values declined last month as they have done ever since the market peaked in January - with six consecutive monthly falls now recorded.

Values are now 10.5% lower than at the start of the year. Month-on-month values fell by £71 (1%) to £7,000 in July, while CAP performance improved by over a point to 95.98%. Following the general market sentiment, sold volumes reduced when compared to June. Year-on-year values are behind by £180 or 2.5%.

The headline average used car value declined in July, as would typically be expected at the onset of the summer holiday months. Values across the board fell to £5,633 down from the £5,662 recorded in June - a £29 decrease that was equivalent to 0.5% fall.

Year-on-year, July 2011 is £151 (-2.6%) behind the same month in 2010. Sold volumes stalled after several months of steady growth, falling by 5.5% - a reflection of the generally lower levels of activity over the summer months. Performance against CAP 'clean' improved by around a point to 95.6%.

BCA communications director Tony Gannon said: 'The summer months are typically a time of slow demand and reduced activity in the retail car markets and this is reflected in the wholesale used car sector. While there are, of course, worrying signs from the economy that will not have helped, it is not unusual for values to fall back in the peak summer months.'

Gannon added: 'However there are some pressures in the marketplace and conversion rates remain fragile. We expect the market to remain steady during August, but will be looking for activity to increase in the wake of the September plate change.'

The part-exchange sector bucked the general market trend, posting a modest increase of £24 (nearly 1%) to £2,672. Year-on-year figures are ahead by £131 (5.1%), the only sector demonstrating value growth compared to 2010.

The nearly-new sector saw values fall from £19,578 to £17,897, equivalent to an 8.5% decrease, but model mix will have been largely responsible for the changes in this sector as volumes are so low.

Gannon concluded: 'Looking back over the past year, used car values have generally been very stable - particularly in the larger volume sectors of fleet/lease and part-exchange. This underlines the relative strength in depth of the used car market, particularly when considering the difficult economic conditions over the same period.'

Proxy bidding on Simulcast and CyberAuction goes mobile

MANHEIM Remarketing has enhanced its new automatic bidding service (proxy bidding) by making it available to trade buyers through the mobile version of its website available on the iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad Android and Blackberry (OS 6) platforms.

Since the launch of online proxy bidding earlier this year the number of vehicles bought now accounts for more than 10% of all online sales each month.

Proxy bidding offers greater flexibility to the busy trade buyer: if they can't attend a physical or online auction then they can place a proxy bid as soon as vehicles appear in the catalogue via either Manheim's mobile or standard internet site.

The buyer enters a maximum amount they are willing to pay for that vehicle. This amount will always be kept confidential. Then whenever another bidder places a bid, Manheim's auction software will automatically enter the lowest possible bid on behalf of the proxy bidder, up to their maximum bid or until they are the winning bidder. As the winner of the auction, only the lowest possible winning bid will be paid, not necessarily their maximum bid.

In a response to the changing needs of used car buyers, Manheim Remarketing launched a mobile version of its website in March, to allow buyers access to auction information on-the-go.

Mike Pilkington, managing director, Manheim Remarketing, said: 'As more and more people embrace the latest in mobile communications and use smart phones to access the internet, our vendors want their vehicles presented to the widest possible audience while our buyers are demanding more flexible ways to buy from auction that reflect their busy lifestyles. Bringing proxy bidding into a mobile environment does just that.'

RV bonus for Mazda Business Line model

FLEETS are in for a residual value bonus if they choose the new Mazda6 'Business Line' model, according to latest data from used car experts at CAP.

The 2.2-litre diesel five-door hatchback, which is available to order now, will retain 34% of its £18,130 P11D value - on-the-road list price is £18,300 - at the benchmark three-year/60,000-mile threshold, according to CAP. This is 4.5 percentage points above the average for its direct competitor set.

The 'Business Line' model has been specifically launched for fleets and is available in one highly specified model with Sanyo TomTom satellite navigation, Bluetooth technology and 17-in alloy wheels in addition to the standard model specification it shares.

Commenting on the arrival of the new derivative of Mazda's best-selling range into the UK fleet sector, Jeff Knight, editor of Monitor-Cars, CAP's residual value guide, said: 'Not only has Mazda launched a desirable model for company car drivers, it has succeeded in adding equipment which also has kerb appeal in the future used car market. Tangible items of specification such as satellite navigation, larger alloy wheels and increasingly Bluetooth® are valued by second buyers hence the improved residual value.'

Other features on the Mazda6 'Business Line' include: Dynamic Stability Control (DSC) and Traction Control System (TCS) with Electronic Brake-force Distribution (EBD) and Emergency Brake Assist (EBA) as well as front, side and curtain airbags, cruise control and dual-zone climate control air conditioning.

Emitting 138g/km of CO₂, the car sits in the 20% benefit-in-kind tax bracket for 2011/12.

The first deliveries of the car will begin in late summer and Mazda anticipates that it will sell approximately 500 'Business Line' models in the remainder of 2011. Annual sales are expected to total around 1,000 units.

This is the first time Mazda has introduced a model specifically intended to appeal to company car drivers through a combination of both features and attractive benefit-in-kind rates.

Politics and regulation

Public backs 20mph speed limits

SIXTY-seven per cent of people think that 20mph zones should be used outside schools according to the latest poll of nearly 4,000 people by the IAM.

A further 38% think that they should be used on roads with amenities such as parks and shops, but only a quarter would like to see them made the default speed limit in all built-up areas. Some 43% of people would like the road outside their house to have a 20mph speed limit, but opinion is split here as 39% wouldn't. Forty per cent of people think that this speed limit is best enforced by speed limit signs, leaving the police to enforce the limit and the public to comply. Measures to physically slow people down are less popular, with only 20% in favour of safety cameras, and 21% supporting a combination of measures including road humps and cameras. Respondents felt that enforcing the limit in 20mph zones should be of medium priority compared to other road policing duties.

IAM head of road safety Kevin Delaney said: 'The IAM supports the selective use of 20mph speed limits where there is clear evidence that the risk of casualties will be reduced. But blanket 20mph speed limits or limits at inappropriate sites risk widespread disregard by drivers who do not recognise a necessity for them. Consultation with, and buy-in from, local people here is essential.

'Passive enforcement measures, such as speed bumps, are unpopular and active enforcement by police is unrealistic in the current financial climate. If lower speed limits are restricted to locations and times where there is an obvious need, responsible drivers, who are the overwhelming majority, will adhere to them without the need for enforcement.'

Exceptional hardship drivers could create headache

COMPANY car and van drivers with 12 points on their licence who escape a driving ban by pleading 'exceptional hardship' could create a headache for fleet managers, says CFC Solutions.

The company points to a widely reported case this month where a driver in Blackburn was allowed to keep their licence despite clocking up 30 points by mounting a defence that loss of licence would cause them severe problems.

Neville Briggs, managing director at CFC, said: 'The rule is normally that 12 points results in an immediate ban but by pleading 'exceptional hardship' to a magistrate, which could consequences such as loss of a job, some drivers keep their licences.

'Thankfully, this is a fairly rare occurrence but it does prompt a question for fleet managers that could create a managerial headache - do you continue to employ a driver with more than 12 points because they represent such a risk to your company and, also, would it be legal for you to dismiss them?'

Briggs said that among the tens of thousands of company car and van drivers who were checked using CFC's Licence Check software, three had more than 12 points, indicating that the problem was rare but not unknown.

He continued: 'Probably the best way for fleet managers to circumvent this problem is by writing something into employee contracts stipulating that there is an option to dismiss an employee if they rack up more than 12 points.

'Certainly, if you continued to employ a driver who racked up, for example, 15-20 points and that person then caused a serious accident, you would probably be on shaky ground from a duty of care point of view. That person is a known high risk. '

Dealer news

SEAT comes out top in dealer survey

SEAT is celebrating another awards triumph with the news that it has come out top in the *Car Dealer* Power survey.

Scores of SEAT franchises nationwide took part in the survey, which gives UK car dealers the opportunity to rate their brand on everything from finance offers and warranty arrangements to marketing, brand awareness, bonus structure and return on investment.

SEAT soared to the top of the *Car Dealer* poll with a score of 90%, a leap of 18 places on its position in last year's survey. Underlining its exceptional performance, it also claimed the title of most improved maker. With almost 130 sales and service dealers nationwide, SEAT is bucking the prevailing market trend by growing both its market share and its absolute sales. July was SEAT UK's best-ever market share for a single month with a figure of 2.07%, sales of 21,228 year-to-date were another all-time record in the UK and so far this year.

SEAT's sales are up 6.7% in a market down 6.7% as a whole. Commenting on the brand's performance in the survey *Car Dealer* editor James Baggott said: 'Let's look at the cold hard facts: not only did SEAT win

this year's *Car Dealer* Power survey to be awarded the 'Best manufacturer to represent' title but it did so in style as the most improved maker, too. That really is something to be proud of.

He added: 'The Spanish firm has clearly listened to concerns from its dealer network and tackled problem areas. Stock levels, bonuses and return on investment were all cited as problem areas in 2010 – but now all three receive either 'faultless' or 'excellent' ratings.'

Overall SEAT scored eight 'excellent' ratings where last year no area achieved higher than a 'good'. Marketing in print and on the radio was cited as impressive, while the extensive Ecomotive range was another factor in the marque's success, said dealers.

SEAT UK managing director Peter Wyhinny welcomed the great feedback from dealers. He said: 'I'm very pleased to see that our network is so happy at the moment.'

'The dedicated SEAT UK Operations team and, indeed, the whole staff at SEAT UK headquarters work tirelessly to support our dealers, improve processes and generate innovative ideas to help them improve their sales and profitability. I'm very happy to see the dealer network recognise the team's endeavours.'

'Clearly, this exceptional effort is paying dividends and – with a major product offensive just around the corner – I'm sure our dealers can look forward to a very busy and productive future.'

Dealership improvement programme for Renault

RENAULT is launching a new dealership improvement programme including online dealer ratings as part of its new retail promise in an attempt to highlight its improvements in product quality, reliability and service.

The dealership improvement programme will concentrate on enhancing the performance of the bottom 20% of its UK dealers with the aim of improving the customer experience.

Renault will introduce performance managers to those dealerships 'to diagnose why they're not providing the levels of experience required by Renault customers'.

The programme has already been running and Renault says it has seen a graduation rate of over three-quarters for the dealers that have already entered the programme.

The online dealer ratings, which will be introduced next month, will list individual satisfaction ratings of each of the 4,500 Renault customers interviewed each month.

The satisfaction rating, together with the actual customer comments verbatim, will be available to view for both sales and service customers for each of Renault UK's dealerships.

Renault launched its business promise for fleet customers a year ago and a retail version will launch in January 1, 2012. The Renault Quality Commitment will guarantee the quality of a customer's car or van is mirrored by the level of service they receive from Renault. More details of what will be included in the retail promise will be revealed closer to launch.

The French brand publicly acknowledges its electronic issues which affected some of its older models, including the second-generation Mégane and Laguna, principally concerning certain electric window mechanisms and early-generation electronic instrument displays.

However, Renault said it had not shied away from the issues and implemented a customer goodwill programme to cover concerns. Renault will also now be including a Renault Quality Made stamp on all of its communications.

Renault is also rolling out its Project Air corporate identity revamp which is upgrading the exterior and interiors of all its dealerships. Currently a fifth of UK dealerships have adopted the new CI and the rest of the network will be up-to-date before the end of 2014.

BEN welcomes support from Snap-On

AUTOMOTIVE Charity BEN has announced a major new initiative aimed at increasing grass-roots awareness of the scope and scale of its work among members of the UK automotive industry.

The new marketing campaign, the latest in a number of nationwide campaigns announced by BEN in recent months, will see the charity partner with UK market leader in automotive tools Snap-On to take the awareness message direct to garage mechanics the length and breadth of the country.

Snap-On will be providing BEN with free advertising space within their 80,000 flyers which are distributed twice monthly by their 435 franchisees and will also be making BEN promotional materials available in their national vans fleet.

Snap-On managing director Aldo Rodi said: 'BEN performs such a marvellous job looking after so many people who work in our industry and their dependents. This is why we have agreed to work with them to provide support in their efforts to achieve greater exposure to the automotive aftermarket and service sector.' In addition to this, Snap-On has called upon its long-standing relationship with McLaren to commission and donate a limited edition sport tool box which will be signed by two of the current drivers and offered as a prize in a competition to be run by BEN later this year.

BEN chief executive David Main welcomed Snap-On's support saying: 'BEN's primary marketing focus over the course of the coming year will be on raising the visibility of the help we are able to give and to those who are eligible to receive it. The more people who know about BEN, the more we can extend our reach to help them should they need us.'

'The massive exposure we will achieve by being partnered by so major a player in the UK market as Snap-On will be invaluable to us in achieving that aim and we are extremely grateful to Aldo and his team at Snap-On for helping to make that happen.'

[General motor industry news](#)

Manufacturers flock to exhibit at low carbon vehicle event

MANY of the world's major car, commercial vehicle and public service vehicle manufacturers will join a record number of technology and infrastructure businesses showcasing products at LCV2011.

The event takes place on September 7 and 8 at the Rockingham Race Circuit in Northamptonshire and is hosted by Cenex, the Centre of Excellence for Low Carbon and Fuel Cell technologies.

Billed as 'the UK's leading low carbon vehicle event', exhibitors include Ford, General Motors, Toyota, Nissan, Jaguar Land Rover, Iveco and Mercedes-Benz. The event combines a business-to-business conference, exhibition and ride-and-drive experience.

The conference will be opened by Mark Prisk, Minister for Business and Enterprise, and the preliminary speaker line-up includes Lord Paul Drayson (former Minister of state for science and innovation and now managing partner in Drayson Racing Technologies LLP), Iain Gray (chief executive, Technology Strategy Board), Jerry Hardcastle (chair of the Technology Group of the Automotive Council) and Michael Hurwitz (director, Office of Low Emission Vehicles).

The exhibition space at LCV2011 will feature more than 87 of the UK's leading technology and solutions providers, whose innovations are at the heart of low carbon vehicles and their supporting infrastructure.

The Technology Strategy Board is a major partner in LCV2011 and will use the event to publish data from the first three months of the world's largest low carbon vehicle trial. The study is monitoring 329 electric and low carbon cars of all types - from vans to luxury sports cars - on UK roads as part of the Ultra Low Carbon Vehicle Demonstrator programme, launched in 2009.

Over the two-day event it is anticipated that exhibitors will be joined by over 2,000 delegates from vehicle manufacturers, the motor industry supply chain, infrastructure providers and fleet operators.

Brendan Connor, Cenex chairman said: 'It is becoming increasingly apparent that the industry's first challenge is to advance the technologies - and required infrastructures - to make low carbon vehicles more economic to manufacture and easier to sell. The second challenge is to educate buyers - private, public and commercial - about the range of options available now and in the future.'

Further information is available at: www.lcv2011.co.uk.

Kwik-Fit looks to expand fleet business as Towers takes up new role

BRITAIN'S largest independent fast-fit company, Kwik-Fit Fleet, is to increase its focus on winning outright purchase fleet business - as well as continuing to partner Britain's largest contract hire and leasing companies - with the appointment of Martin Towers to the post of corporate and national sales director.

Mr Towers (49) has a near 20-year fleet industry career behind him and will lead Kwik-Fit Fleet's 13-strong sales team. He reports to Kwik-Fit Fleet sales director Peter Lambert and takes over from Peter Bennett who left the company earlier this year.

As corporate and national sales director, Towers manages both sides of Kwik-Fit Fleet's sales departments - corporate account managers, who handle relationships with contract hire and leasing companies, and area sales managers, who manage partnerships with outright purchase fleets.

Towers said: 'Over the years Kwik-Fit Fleet has been hugely successful in winning business from the major leasing companies and our very strong focus in that sector of the market will continue.

'However, we are putting an added emphasis on relations with outright purchase fleets and look forward to taking our product offering to more of those organisations.'

Towers has been promoted to his new job from being a corporate account manager having rejoined Kwik-Fit Fleet in 2008 as national sales manager.

He initially joined Kwik-Fit Fleet in 1993, but left in 2000 to join Tyreserve, which became AA Tyrefit, as sales director and also worked elsewhere within the giant motoring organisation. From 2003 until 2006 he was at National Fleet, a division of National Tyres, as commercial director and then moved to Stapleton's Tyre Services as general manager of fleet development for two years.

Lambert said: 'Kwik-Fit Fleet is entering an exciting new era under new ownership. Itochu is already very familiar with the UK automotive sector and has plans to invest in Kwik-Fit centres and to further enhance the delivery of excellent customer service.

'Martin has huge experience of the UK fleet industry and his knowledge coupled with Itochu's focus on quality, customer service and training will bring significant benefits to the corporate sector.'

Given takes charge of sales at Pendragon

WELL-known fleet industry personality John Given has taken over as sales director at Pendragon Contracts from the retiring Mike Roe, who had the job title head of sales.

With more than 25 years leasing industry experience, Given will help build on and drive forward the company's strategic business growth in the corporate fleet market.

Prior to joining Pendragon Contracts, he spent 20 years at Lloyds TSB Autolease as sales director and more recently was commercial director for GE Commercial Finance Fleet Services before joining Manheim Europe where he was group sales director for three years.

Duffy takes charge at Halfords Autocentres

HALFORDS has appointed Bill Duffy as chief executive of Halfords Autocentres with effect from September 12.

Duffy has been chief operating officer at Halfords Autocentres, previously Nationwide Autocentres, since February 2006.

In his new role, Duffy plans to continue to grow Halfords Autocentres' market share. He will also oversee the expansion of the chain to 400 Autocentres over the next five years.

Duffy takes over from Duncan Wilkes who will leave the business, following a handover, after five and a half years as chief executive having decided to look for new challenges.

Wilkes led the MBO of the Nationwide business with Phoenix in 2006, managed the growth which followed, the sale to Halfords and its rebranding as Halfords Autocentres which was completed in March.

Alison Jones joins Audi UK to take on top operations role

AUDI has announced that the head of operations role at its UK headquarters has been taken up by Alison Jones, who joins the 'Vorsprung durch Technik' brand from Volkswagen Group Customer Services. Jones succeeds the interim head of operations, Julie Evetts, and brings a wealth of experience from her roles at Volkswagen Group and elsewhere in the automotive sector to Audi. Most recently, she masterminded an overhaul of the Volkswagen Group Customer Service Centre, where she was Head of Contact Strategy for Audi, Volkswagen, Commercial Vehicles, Skoda and SEAT.

Robin Woolcock, Volkswagen Group's managing director, said 'Her breadth of knowledge across all areas of the business, particularly her impressive record in customer services, combined with her commercial, leadership and change management skills stands her in good stead for her latest role as Head of Operations for Audi UK. Alison will be responsible for new and used car sales, agreeing production volumes as well as network and franchise responsibility for the UK, and we're confident that she will excel in all areas.'

Jones first started working for the Volkswagen Group in 1988, before moving to Exel Logistics Fleet Management and later to Unicam. She returned to Volkswagen Group in 1998 and has undertaken roles encompassing operations, finance, aftersales and customer service. From 2007 to 2010, Jones was head of aftersales and customer service for Volkswagen UK.

Kia names new rental and leasing manager

KIA is strengthening its plan to grow its presence in the UK fleet market with the appointment of Andy Dunsdon to the newly-created role of national rental and leasing manager.

Dunsdon, 49 and from Buckinghamshire, moves to the role after three years in the Kia Fleet department as a Regional Business Sales Manager and over 12 years experience of working in the fleet arena at General Motors and Saab.

John Hargreaves, head of fleet and remarketing said: 'We have strong ambitions in the fleet market over the coming years, and have some fantastic product to do it with, so having the right people, with the right experience, in place to tell our customers about this is vital. I am delighted to welcome Andy to his new role within the Kia Fleet team.'

Dunsdon commented: 'Kia has been on a relentless product offensive in the last few years that is bringing lots of new customers from the business sector to our brand. I'm excited to take on the challenge of expanding our partnerships with major rental and leasing partners and developing even stronger ties with our existing clients.'

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