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Latest Motor Industry News

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The Editor's View

THE UK new car market has been kept afloat this year by rising demand from fleets. Fleet registrations are 4.6% up year-on-year and sales to small businesses are also fractionally up in a market that has seen private sector volumes dive more than 14%. However, while the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders says it is 'cautious' in forecasting 2012 sales, Deloitte's David Raistrick is more forthright. New car sales, he says, will fall - possibly by as many as 140,000 units next year - and that includes fleet sales. With fears that the UK and global economies could dip into recession again, calculations that motor manufacturer production is, once again, outstripping global demand for new cars is extremely worrying. Over capacity has been an industry headache for years, but hopes were high that the 2008-9 recession had led to a prevailing of common sense production levels. If reports of three million excess cars are right then a slump in sales is profoundly damaging for the economies of the UK, Europe and the world.

Fleet file

Fleet sales keep UK new car market afloat

FLEET demand continues to drive the UK new car market, which fell by 4.2% in November to 134,027 units (November 2010: 139,875), but was some 5,000 units above Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders' forecasts.

With just December's new car registrations to be counted it means that 2011 volumes are 4.5% down on 12 months ago at 1,822,065 (2010: 1,907,029).

However, the SMMT says the market looks set to better its full year forecast of 1.923 million units and be close to 1.94m, but it remains cautious over 2012.

New car registrations were just 0.9% lower than a year ago in the last three months, and volumes over the past six months were also only down a modest 1.8%. However, the market continues to trend some 20% below pre-recession levels.

The SMMT said: 'Market stability in recent months is at odds with growing concerns over the economic setting. Whilst the [Government's] Autumn Statement announced some welcome measures to stimulate growth, the latest forecasts for the UK economy and concerns over the Eurozone are unsettling.'

The decline in November registrations marked the ninth monthly fall this year, although registrations were up in both August and October.

However, fleet sales were 7.5% up at 74,638 last month (November 2010: 69,442) and means segment registrations for the year are 4.6% ahead of last year at 951,278 (2010: 909,230). Business sector sales fell 15.7% last month to 5,129 units (November 2010: 6,081) but they remain 1.2% ahead of last year at 92,995 (2010: 91,877).

Therefore, it is private buyers that continue to stay away from car showrooms and last month the sector was 15.7% down at 54,260 registrations (November 2010: 54,260) to leave year-to-date volumes 14.1% down at 777,792 (November 2010: 905,922).

Diesel and alternatively fuelled cars both took record market shares in November of 55.6% and 1.6% respectively.

As new car buyers looked out for the most fuel efficient models, average new car fuel efficiency has improved 29.3% in last 10 years, giving the highest ever average mpg at 52.5 mpg.

SMMT chief executive Paul Everitt said: 'Despite the Chancellor delaying the 3p rise in fuel duty [in the Autumn Statement], our cost of fuel is still among the highest in Europe, so customers are sure to welcome the 29.3% improvement in new car fuel efficiency over the last 10 years, a demonstration of industry's commitment to delivering good value to motorists.'

The Ford Fiesta remained the best selling model in both November and over the year-to-date with Ford the leading motor manufacturer.

Fleet sales to fall as new car volumes come under pressure in 2012

NEW car sales will total only 1.84 million in 2012 and could fall to 1.8m, according to a forecast by David Raistrick, UK manufacturing leader at Deloitte, the business advisory firm, who believes fleet sales are likely to fall next year.

He is forecasting a 'levelling off' in the retail sector of sales both in new and used car sales. That follows a decline in used car sales from just under 7.5m in 2007 to a predicted 6.78m for 2011.

'We expect a more restricted number of nearly new used vehicles coming on to the market in 2012 as a result of low registration volumes over the past few years,' said Raistrick. 'This assumes that the bulk of scrappage [scheme] cars are going to be retained by their purchasers and not re-enter the used car market. As a result of this restricted used car supply, a number of consumers will turn to new vehicles. This will help to balance in part the drop in private consumer demand, with individuals deferring their purchase due to economic environment concerns.

'With a limited supply of used vehicles due to reduced levels of non-scrappage new car sales for the last few years, I would expect residual values of used cars to hold steady, or in some cases, even rise slightly due to lack of supply, despite my analysis that used car sales will fall in 2012 to around 6.78m units.

'Overall therefore, I would forecast a slight drop on both new and used car sales volumes, but with residual values for used cars remaining firm.'

He added: 'In the all important fleet market, there has been a steady increase in year on year sales over 2011, as fleet buyers who had previously delayed their replacement cycles came back to the market.

‘However, with this pent up demand largely satisfied, we will start to see new registration volumes in this sector of the market fall in 2012.’

Turning to overcapacity issues, Europe was starting to see a growing mountain of new cars awaiting sale, said Raistrick.

‘Current estimates suggest that there may be as many as three million excess cars produced in Europe next year that have no global buyers for them. While the UK is not necessarily seeing the same levels of capacity yet, a continuous fall in consumer confidence and therefore new car sales could lead to a similar scenario in the next few months.

Public sector fleets urged to lead electric vehicle revolution

PUBLIC sector cars and vans should be electric by 2020 and drivers should be given a £10,000 subsidy to help offset the purchase price of the zero emission vehicles, according to environmental campaign group WWF Scotland.

The organisation has published a new report, *‘Powering ahead: how to put electric cars on Scotland’s roads’*, which sets out opportunities for government and industry to support the major uptake of electric vehicles in Scotland.

Previous WWF research has identified that Scotland needs electric vehicles to replace 300,000 petrol/diesel cars by 2020 to help ensure climate emission targets are met.

In wanting Scotland to be in pole position to become a leader in electric car future, WWF Scotland has called for:

- The Scottish Government provides a £10,000 subsidy - £5,000 to come from the existing UK Plug-In Grant scheme - for the first 25,000 electric vehicles sold in Scotland to kick start uptake; then £5,000 for the second 25,000 electric vehicles in Scotland, and reducing for subsequent 25,000 electric vehicle milestones.
- The Scottish Government, local authorities and other public sector organisations to support an earlier than average switch to low carbon emissions vehicles for public sector fleet cars and vans vehicles through procurement policies; and a 2020 target for 100% of public sector fleets to be electric, where appropriate.
- National and local government to work together to incentivise businesses to install recharging points. That would involve engaging directly with the largest businesses with employee carparks to highlight the benefits of encouraging use of electric vehicles rather than conventional vehicles; by providing free advice; and by providing match funding to ‘innovator’ and ‘early adopter’ businesses wishing to install recharging points in existing parking spaces. The measures, says the report, would be most effective if linked to exemption from a Workplace Parking Levy.
- Car clubs to add electric vehicles to their fleets.
- A scrappage scheme to be introduced encourage consumers to purchase electric vehicles.

Dr Richard Dixon, director of WWF Scotland said: ‘Making Scotland a world leader in the race to an all electric future could reap huge rewards including reducing emissions, tackling air quality, driving innovation and investment in a new industry.

‘Our report recognises there will be challenges on the way to achieving this vision, but sets out solutions to help make this a reality. The first step to reaching our goal is for the Scottish Government to publish an action plan setting out its vision for the role of electric cars in a sustainable transport future.’

Scottish Transport Minister Keith Brown said: 'We are committed to achieving our target of almost total decarbonisation of road transportation by 2050, a wholesale shift to electric and other low carbon vehicles will be key to making this a reality. The public sector has an important leadership role to play, and we have already invested over £8 million to support public bodies in switching to electric vehicles and installing charging points.'

- The report is accessible at http://www.wwfscotland.org.uk/evs

ACFO calls for company car benefit-in-kind tax shake-up

ACFO has called for the 'totally unjustified' 3% diesel company car benefit-in-kind tax surcharge to be scrapped in discussions with Government officials.

The request came during a recent face-to-face meeting with officials from HM Treasury and HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and was accompanied with a renewed call for five years advance notice of future company car benefit-in-kind tax rates.

Since April 2002 company car benefit-in-kind tax has been based on a car's list price and official CO2 emission figure. However, a 3% supplement up to the maximum charge of 35% has been levied on diesel cars, although it was waived for models first registered before the end of 2005 that met the European Commission Euro 4 standard.

Now ACFO says the 3% surcharge should be abolished for a number of reasons including:

- The additional tax was levied because in 2002 diesel cars were regarded as significant polluters. However, today's models have CO2 emissions below those of their petrol-engined equivalents.
- The fuel efficiency of some of today's petrol-engined models have improved significantly and, coupled with the price premium of diesel cars over petrol equivalents and the widening price differential between petrol and diesel at the pumps the advantages of diesel - even with a tax penalty - are being wiped out.
- Forthcoming Euro 6 emissions standards - due to be introduced on September 1, 2014 for new models, and from January 1, 2015 for the registration and sale of new types of cars - could add 'several' hundred pounds' to the price of diesel cars to ensure compliance.

ACFO chairman Julie Jenner said: 'There are no valid reasons for today's diesel models to carry a 3% company car benefit-in-kind supplement. It was introduced almost a decade ago for reasons than no longer exist.

'The tax system must reflect today's vehicle technology and be fair and neutral irrespective of powertrain type. If the Government retains the 3% tax burden then it could see an increasing number of company car drivers opting for petrol-engined models with their improving MPG and lower list prices.

'Personal budgets are being squeezed, and evidence suggests that average company car mileage is reducing. If drivers can save money by selecting a petrol-engined model in comparison with a diesel car they will make that choice. Ultimately, the Government's decision to retain the 3% supplement may prove to be counter productive and the tax-take will reduce.'

Meanwhile, the Government historically gave three years notice of company car benefit-in-kind tax thresholds, but that has slipped to two years with the 18-month-old coalition regime.

In the spring Budget, the coalition Government confirmed company car benefit-in-kind tax rates through to 2013-14 prompting ACFO to issue a call in the spring for five years advance notification with vehicle replacement cycles extending.

That request was repeated at the recent meeting with Jenner saying: 'Many employees have their company cars replaced on a four-year cycle so they remain in the dark as to what their benefit-in-kind tax burden will be in the third and fourth year.

‘We had success with calling for three years advance notification and with some fleets adopting longer vehicle replacement cycles, we will continue to push for five years in our talks with Government officials.’

Fleets face up to Olympic size transport nightmare

WILL the UK cover itself in glory or cringe with shame? That’s the Olympic size nightmare facing the country with the London Games due to open next summer, according to Roddy Graham, commercial director of vehicle management group Leasedrive.

In making his predictions for 2012, Graham said: ‘Lord Coe [London 2012 chairman] appears to be doing an admirable job in steering the construction and build-up but he has no control over the transport infrastructure.

‘More’s the pity as a transport nightmare in our capital beckons next summer. While affecting the fleet sector for 16 days, other factors will come into play throughout the year outside the pursuit for gold.

Referring to the Olympics, which open in London in July, Graham said: ‘It’s hard to see London not repeating the Atlanta Games nightmare when it comes to transportation delays. During the 16 days, an extra nine million spectators will descend on the capital, which is often log-jammed at the best of times.

‘Expect fireworks at the very least but hopefully not the launch of any surface to air missiles which may be used to protect the Olympics from terrorist attacks. Transport definitely appears a weak link and will affect the fleet industry.’

Commenting on further consolidation in the vehicle leasing sector, Graham said: ‘With the top 10 in the 2011 *Fleet News FN50* accounting for 75% [of vehicles] and the top 25 accounting for 94% of the funding of the smallest *FN50* for 12 years, expect consolidation to continue with fewer players making up a more select league table.’

‘Inevitably, the cream will rise to the top as further industry consolidation takes place and innovators capitalise on the tough times ahead by pressing home their competitive advantage.’

Other key trends highlighted by Graham for 2012 were:

- Asset funding vs. asset management - ‘As the squeeze continues on financial institutions, set against a backdrop of the Eurozone debt crisis, expect further banks to question non-core activities and consider concentrating on what they do best. At the same time, expect potential new funding entrants to the leasing market with an appetite for healthy profit. There’s a wide gap between asset funding and asset management which more banks are recognising - expect change.’
- Cost - the war cry - ‘Top of the agenda in the current tough economic climate is a renewed focus on costs. Expect every cost line to be challenged and the winners will be those who do even more with less. Past failure to invest in leading edge fleet systems will expose those who for too long were content to rest on their laurels.’
- Tax efficiencies = more salary sacrifice schemes - ‘With salaries frozen or increases kept to a bare minimum, salary sacrifice could become more popular for hard-pressed employees wishing to see their money go further.’
- Company cars vs. cars-for-cash - ‘Companies are becoming increasingly aware of their duty of care responsibilities. Driven by concerns over potential corporate as well as individual director liability, companies are favouring a return of the company car. For them, it’s a safer, greener and cheaper option than cash-for-car and for drivers it’s a more attractive component of a total reward package.’
- Electric vehicle charge forward - ‘With more and more new electric vehicles coming on stream from vehicle manufacturers, expect them to start making their presence quietly felt. I expect more people to test them, either through city car clubs or vehicle rental companies.’

- Greater pump price stability - 'The price of oil has risen steadily, now hovering around $98 a barrel. Uncertainty surrounding Iran's nuclear capability could hasten major hostilities in the region. If that should happen, expect a major war and a leap in oil prices. Closer to home, the FairFuelUK Campaign has had unprecedented success so far and expect it therefore to drive for more concessions from Government.'
- Lower vehicle rental costs - 'The word on the street is that one of the major rental companies has so upset rivals that they have had enough and are determined to recover market share through aggressive pricing. A price war for market share would result in lower vehicle rental costs. The only question is how long the price war can continue before one of the major names cries wolf as profits become significantly impacted.'
- Proliferation of fleet management outsourcing - 'In a tough economic climate, businesses naturally wish to focus on core activities, those that they are expert at. Non-core activities tend to get outsourced in such circumstances and expect the trend to continue. So once again I expect a steady rise in medium and large-sized organisations turning to fleet outsourcing.'

Firms win royal award approval for risk management

PRINCE Michael of Kent gave the coalition Government a mild rebuke over its road safety policy at the annual lunch to celebrate this year's winners of his International Road Safety Awards.

Among the awards winners were Fleet Support Group for its RiskMaster online occupational road risk management system and GreenRoad for its in-vehicle driver monitoring system, while fleet awards also went to BT with Suckling Transport highly commended for their efforts in tackling road safety in the workplace.

Transport Minister Mike Penning was unable to attend the event at London's Savoy Hotel due to Parliamentary business.

Prince Michael said the Minister's non-appearance was a disappointment as he 'wanted to know where road safety sits in the Government priorities'.

Although the number of UK road deaths have dropped to an all-time low at below 2,000 last year, each fatality costs the economy £2 million.

Adding up to a total cost of £4 billion - excluding the cost of serious and slight injury road casualties - he praised organisations such as Fleet Support Group and GreenRoad, which each won Fleet Technology Awards.

Nevertheless, the Prince said while he was pleased to see that road risk management innovation was helping the economy by reducing road deaths and injuries he was 'surprised' that the Government was relying on such organisations without contributing some support - with road safety funding now devolved to the regions.

The award for Fleet Support Group was the latest to be won by the fleet management company for the system, which is branded RiskMaster, and earlier this year was called 'the most complete occupational road risk management solution on the market' in an independent survey undertaken by Toot Rock Consulting.

Prince Michael described RiskMaster as an 'innovative web-based fully integrated management information programme that reduces risk, enhances compliance and helps to improve business efficiency'.

RiskMaster is used by a wide range of leading UK organisations to manage vehicles and employees who drive for work in accordance with best practice. Those businesses include: Balfour Beatty Utility Solutions, Dun and Bradstreet, Geoffrey Osborne, Michelin, Molson Coors Brewing Company, RWE npower and WH Smith.

The Prince Michael Award for GreenRoad was its second with the company having previously won in 2008 in partnership with Staffordshire County Council.

GreenRoad stems the cause of crashes by enhancing driver decision-making while behind the wheel. As driving decisions are responsible for 90% of all accidents and up to 33% of fuel spend, the only way to truly reduce risk and improve efficiency is by focusing on driver decision-making, says the company.

A typical customer sees a 50% reduction in crashes, while the technology also cuts fleet costs through reduced fuel consumption, vehicle wear-and-tear and reduced insurance premiums.

BT has one of the largest fleets in Europe with 34,000+ vehicles in the UK alone. The company's programmes, policies, procedures and processes implemented over the last 10 years to promote safe and fuel-efficient driving have resulted in a halving of crashes and a £12 million saving.

Finally, Essex-based tanker operator Suckling Transport operates a telematics-based incentive-led driver and journey management programme to reduce its road risk.

Car rental: the sustainable and cheaper motoring alternative

UK rental cars emit less carbon dioxide emissions and local air pollutants, are safer and are used more efficiently than the average privately-owned car, according to new research published by the British Vehicle Rental and Leasing Association (BVRLA).

The research, it says, helps establish some of the sustainability credentials of car rental and supports the industry's call for it to be given greater consideration in transport policymaking.

Conducted by transport research body TRL on behalf of the British Vehicle Rental and Leasing Association, the study, which has gained ministerial backing, found that:

- Average emissions from UK rental cars were 12% lower than the average for the UK car fleet
- Rental vehicles were newer and better maintained than the average privately owned car and more likely to be fitted with recent safety technology
- Because they are used more often than the average privately-owned car, rental vehicles are more cost efficient and can help reduce the parking congestion seen in urban areas
- Rental provides a relatively cheap way of accessing cars compared with personal ownership
- Rental provides a key link to other forms of transport

'Coming just a week after the RAC told us that the annual cost of motoring had risen by 14% to over £6,600 a year *(Digest: November 23, 2011)*, this research is perfectly timed,' said BVRLA chief executive John Lewis.

'It is now clearer than ever that car rental presents a cheaper, safer and more sustainable alternative to car ownership for millions of business and leisure motorists.

'We hope that this research will help convince policymakers to give car rental more consideration within the general transport mix.'

Transport Minister Norman Baker said: 'For too long the rented car has seemed like a poor relation to its private counterpart. Yet this report from the vehicle rental industry shows that, in environmental terms, rental cars often represent the cheaper, more efficient and less carbon intensive option. What's more they have real potential to encourage the take-up of new low-carbon vehicle technologies.

'The Government wants people to travel in more sustainable ways, choosing the low-carbon alternatives that suit them best - whether that means working from home, working more flexibly or sharing a car. As this report demonstrates, it's high time renting a car was added to that menu of options.'

A full version of the research project: *'Vehicle rental: environmental and sustainability implications'* can be accessed via the TRL website at: http://www.trl.co.uk/online_store/reports_publications/latest_publications/. A BVRLA summary of the research: *'Car rental - the pay-as-you-go route to responsible motoring'* can be downloaded at www.bvrla.co.uk.

Continued restructuring helps Northgate drive profits forward

NORTHGATE Vehicle Hire is undergoing another restructuring as it seeks to centralise more functions and reduce costs.

The UK business, which initially restructured to 12 business areas with more than 60 sites and rebranded in 2010, has slimmed down to seven regions. In the second half of the 2011-12 financial year, the company is to centralise and reduce the costs of both its finance and administration functions.

The measures were revealed as parent company Northgate, which also has rental operations in Ireland and Spain and a fleet management business, revealed a 19% rise in underlying pre-tax profits to £32.3 million (2010: £27.2m) on underlying turnover of £375.7m (2010: £367.9m) for the six months to October 31, 2011.

Chairman Bob Mackenzie said: 'Current trading is in line with the board's expectations although tough economic conditions continue to affect both the UK and Spanish markets. Effective fleet management has contributed to ongoing reductions in net debt and fleet size, and in turn a strengthening of the Group's capital structure.

'Our focus remains on improving returns and further progress is targeted for the second six months through hire rate improvement, efficient fleet management, further cost reductions and cash generation.

'The uncertain economic outlook makes it more difficult to forecast trading in the medium term. However, we have always been clear that we will reduce the fleet size if necessary to reflect market demand in order to maintain our high utilisation levels and returns.'

The light commercial vehicle rental specialist revealed that its fleet size had shrunk to 56,900 in the UK (April 2011: 61,200) and 42,900 in Spain (April 2011: 43,500) and it had reduced debt by £40.7m to £488.4m during the period under review.

Northgate's underlying operating margin increased to 24% in the period, compared to 23.2% in 2010 and utilisation rates were maintained at 90%. The increase in operating margin was achieved through the actions taken to improve operating efficiency and increase hire rates, alongside the continued strength in the residual prices for used vehicles.

Vehicle hire through Northgate operates on flexible non-contract basis. However, the company said: '[It] saw a reduction in the level of our customers' business activities as a direct consequence of the economic conditions. This has led to some customers switching to contract hire to reduce costs, ignoring the reduced flexibility. We believe that Northgate's flexible model and service is better suited to the depressed economic environment and our sales force is focused on demonstrating this to customers.'

In addition to the ongoing restructuring the reduce costs, Northgate said price rises, increasing the number of vehicles on hire, improved fleet management and improvements in vehicle disposal capabilities were all critical to the business in both the UK and Spain.

Ogilvie launches online 'showroom' to give fleet chiefs control

FAST-expanding Ogilvie Fleet has launched what it says is an industry-leading online fleet manager portal that securely delivers critical live fleet operational data in real-time to the desktops of fleet chiefs.

Called MiFleet Showroom, the completely online facility has been launched to customers six months after Ogilvie Fleet unveiled its new fleet decision-maker and driver website designed to give users a complete overview of operating and tax costs alongside a raft of new informative features.

The unveiling of MiFleet Showroom follows real world testing with 50 clients and represents the culmination of over 12 months development work and a six-figure investment in online technology by Ogilvie Fleet.

The password protected, MiFleet Showroom section of the website - www.ogilvie-fleet.co.uk - is a full-data system that enables fleet decision-makers to manage their vehicles across a number of key areas including: vehicle orders, invoicing, vehicle service and MoT dates, fleet vehicle renewal dates and employee driver licence checks.

A traffic light red, amber and green live summary for each category instantly flags up to fleet decision-makers key issues that need attention. For example, an overdue vehicle service, forthcoming MoT or a driver close to losing their licence. Thus, once logged in, a fleet manager can immediately see any matters of attention by simply looking for the red or amber traffic lights.

If the fleet manager then wishes to make contact with a driver of a vehicle, they can SMS text or email there and then with, say, a reminder about a service due, MoT overdue or recall that hasn't yet been carried out.

One click drill-downs then show significant data relating to each vehicle on the fleet. Contract data, technical data, taxation data, vehicle specifications and extras fitted and the full notification history for the vehicle.

Likewise, one click on a driver's name and the system will provide all the information held against that driver, including their current vehicle, any orders pending, their driver licence details, endorsements and all the dates of any service or MoT notifications sent out to them, And again, for all orders in process, simply clicking the order number will show every bit of detail about the order including when the fleet manager can expect delivery.

An enhanced reporting facility is also built in to MiFleet Showroom. Fleet managers wanting to analyse data more closely can either run a number of standardised one-click reports from the reports area. If they prefer, personalised reports can also be created by selecting the data they want, rearranging or renaming it on screen and then exporting it as an excel file. Once a personal report has been created it can also be stored for easy retrieval next time they use MiFleet Showroom, saving the need to devise a new report each time they log on.

Ogilvie Fleet sales and marketing director Nick Hardy said: 'From the moment a vehicle joins the fleet to the day it is de-fleeted, every necessary action or touchpoint can be studied and investigated.

'We have made the process as simple and straight-forward as we possibly can by using traffic lights to flag up individual vehicle and driver issues. Fleet decision-makers need to be focused on the exceptionals to ensure fleet costs are kept under tight control and corporate health and safety best practice is being followed.

'The traffic light system identifies fleet 'exceptions' at a glance and means that managers can take immediate action by, for example texting or emailing drivers to have their vehicle serviced or MoT'd.

'I absolutely believe that our innovation with MiFleet Showroom puts clear blue sky between Ogilvie Fleet and our competition and that it will become yet another reason why fleets switch over to us.'

Epyx invests in additional servers to protect for fleets and dealers

MOTOR industry e-commerce specialist epyx has invested in additional domain servers across the globe, bringing the new total to 17, to ensure that it provides uninterrupted service for fleet and dealer users.

Previously, epyx used five domain servers but the new arrangement includes a much greater network of machines located in places as far flung as Seattle, Frankfurt, Singapore, Tokyo and Sydney.

epyx's 1link e-commerce platforms claims to have a 'superb record' in terms of availability for the fleets totalling more than two million vehicles and 16,000 franchise dealers, independent garages and fast-fit centres who use them - with accessibility far in excess of 99%.

Gary Gibson, head of customer services at epyx, said: 'Fleets and dealers rely on our 1link platforms being available online at the moment they need them in order to carry out crucial business transactions in areas such as service and maintenance, daily rental and vehicle disposal.

'The new global network of servers means that any issues that threaten access to the platforms - from server failure to regional internet outages and even including natural disaster and terrorist attack - can simply be routed to another part of our network. It provide a very high degree of reassurance for users.'

1link e-commerce platforms provide trading links between fleets and dealers, and have become the industry standard for online trading in the fleet sector.

Tracker patents 'breakthrough' fleet telematics technology

FLEET tracking provider Tracker has unveiled what it calls a 'groundbreaking new technology' that offers fleet managers the most accurate vehicle idling data available on the market.

Patented by Tracker, the Transient Voltage Detection (TVD) technology has been incorporated into Tracker Fleet, its fleet telematics offering to help businesses to significantly improve fuel efficiency and reduce fleet operating costs.

Stephen Doran, managing director of Tracker, said: 'Fuel consumption is a key issue for businesses, but the ability to accurately determine when a journey truly starts or an engine's running time, journey times and average speeds have all been notoriously difficult.

'This hasn't been helped by the fact that vehicle electrical systems have become more complex and in turn, harder to find the right place to connect the ignition sensor. Our engineers have designed a way to overcome this by sensing the electrical noise that is generated when an engine is running.'

Traditionally, fleet tracking units have been connected to a vehicle by using two wires to connect to the vehicle battery and a third wire to connect to the vehicle ignition switch. When the ignition is turned on or off, and therefore the vehicle has started or stopped, journey information is recorded and reported to fleet managers. The new TVD technology eliminates the need to connect a third wire to the vehicle ignition switch.

Instead TVD technology will sense any increase in voltage and, more importantly, electrical noise associated with the engine having started. This means Tracker's fleet telematics offering will automatically and accurately detect through the two wires to the vehicle supply, when the vehicle engine has started and stopped.

Doran said: 'TVD technology gives a true reflection of idle time, critical for many fleet operators. Previously idle times would be generated even if the ignition switch was set to 'accessory', for example to listen to the radio. In this scenario the fleet managers got a notification that the vehicle has started, even though it hadn't, with the idle measurement starting at that point. With TVD we won't have that margin of error, allowing us to always give customers the most accurate idle time.'

Tracker says that the latest enhancement has put businesses back in control of their fleet by realistically monitoring vehicles and drivers to help them reduce fuel costs.

Model update

Vauxhall brings power and ‘low emissions’ with new Insignia model

VAUXHALL’S most powerful diesel engine ever is now available in the Insignia range, producing 195 PS and 400 Nm of torque, but with emissions of 129 g/km.

Known as the Insignia BiTurbo, and on sale now, it’s available with a choice of five-door Hatch and Sports Tourer bodies in SRi, SRi Vx-line and Elite trims, priced from £27,120 on the road.

The twin-sequential turbocharged diesel is based on the existing 1956cc unit which powers key models in the Insignia, Astra and new Zafira Tourer range.

However, in BiTurbo form the engine produces up to 35 PS more power and 50 Nm of extra torque, reducing the 0-60 mph time by nearly one second to 8.2 seconds (Insignia front wheel drive Hatch).

But thanks to a package of eco features - including standard Start/Stop across the range - the front wheel drive Hatch achieves a combined cycle 57.6 mpg, 2.2 mpg better than the single-turbo 2.0 CDTi 160 PS model.

Vauxhall’s FlexRide adaptive damping is standard on all Insignia BiTurbos (normally a £790 option on front-wheel drive Insignias). On four-wheel drive models, FlexRide is integrated with the car’s Torque Transfer Device (TTD) and the rear axle’s electronically controlled Limited Slip Differential (e-LSD).

Engine changes for new Toyota Avensis cut operating costs

THE new Toyota Avensis has gone on sale priced from £18,450 on the road and features a series of changes to the 2.0 D-4D engine that have cut carbon dioxide emissions to 119 g/km (139 g/km in the old model) and improved fuel economy to 61.4 mpg (53.3 mpg in the old model).

The new British-built Avensis sports sharper styling and extra equipment and has also undergone changes to improve its dynamic performance and ride comfort.

Thanks to the revised engine, new Avensis is also primed to deliver significant savings in ownership costs through less money spent at the pumps, lower road tax and, crucial for business users, more favourable company car tax ratings. The car is in the 17% tax bracket - four points lower than the previous model.

It all adds up to a total cost of ownership that has reduced by £2,000 for the best-selling 2.0 D-4D model over three years/60,000 miles, calculates the manufacturer.

With new, longer service intervals factored into the cost equation for business motorists, new Avensis delivers a best-in-class pence-per-mile cost over three years/60,000 miles.

Crunching the figures into a pence-per-mile cost, the new Avensis 2.0 D-4D dips below the 50p mark to deliver the best performance among key competitors, as figures from Kwik Carcost below show.

MODEL	COST PER MILE	3 YEARS/60,000 MILES TOTAL COST
Toyota Avensis 2.0 D-4D TR	49.64p	£29,781
Volkswagen Passat SE 2.0 TDI Bluemotion Tech	51.12p	£30,764
Ford Mondeo Zetec 2.0 TDCi	51.72p	£31,031
Hyundai i40 Style 1.7 CRDi	52.33p	£31,398
Vauxhall Insignia SRi 2.0 CDTi	56.63p	£33,980

Honda Accord ES 2.2 i-DTEC 57.89p £34,736

Elsewhere in the new Avensis line-up the Toyota Optimal Drive 1.8 Valvematic petrol engine with manual or Multidrive S continuously variable transmission and the 2.2 litre D-4D and D-CAT diesels - the latter with six-speed automatic transmission - are carried over from the previous model range.

Among its key competitors, Toyota claims that none matches Avensis in providing satellite navigation as standard, or the advanced connectivity and information features included in the Toyota Touch & Go system.

Volvo drives down emissions with new automatics

VOLVO has launched a range of automatic DRIVe diesel models with the same fuel consumption as manual versions

Four Volvo DRIVe models - the S60 DRIVe, V60 DRIVe, V70 DRIVe and the S80 DRIVe - are now available for the first time with Powershift dual-clutch automatic gearbox.

Combined cycle fuel consumption and carbon dioxide emissions figures for the four models are: S60 DRIVe Automatic - 65.7 mpg/114 g/km, V60 DRIVe Automatic - 62.8 mpg/119 g/km, V70 DRIVe Automatic - 62.8 mpg/119 g/km, S80 DRIVe Automatic - 62.8 mpg/119 g/km.

Customers will be able to order a DRIVe Powershift in early 2012 with production starting mid-February.

On the road prices start at £25,230 for the S60 DRIVe, £26,405 for the V60 DRIVe, £27,730 for the V70 DRIVe and £26,980 for the S80 DRIVe.

The S60, V60, V70 and S80 DRIVe are fitted with Volvo’s latest four-cylinder 8v 1.6 litre turbo diesel engine, which delivers 115 bhp and 270 Nm of torque.

Volvo’s ‘DRIVe Towards Zero’ also includes improvements on petrol engines. By optimising the four-cylinder, 1.6 litre T3 engine (150 bhp), which is available in the S60 and V60, engineers have managed to bring fuel consumption down to 49 mpg in the S60 (previously 42.8 mpg), which corresponds to emissions of 135 g/km, a reduction of 17 g/km.

The Powershift transmission can now be specified with the T3 engine, reducing an entry level price of an automatic S60 to £24,270. The figures for the direct-injected T3 engine combined with automatic Powershift in an S60 are 39.8 mpg and 164 g/km.

The S60 and V60 T3 Powershift will be available to order early 2012 with first deliveries taking place in April.

‘Keeping emissions below 140 g/km is essential since this is a level used by many fleet customers. We have managed to do this in the T3 version through a number of small, significant improvements. We have also optimised the gearbox gearing for maximum fuel efficiency without losing the engine characteristics,’ said a Volvo spokesman.

Renault Scenic range to get 2012 makeover and new engines

RENAULT has released initial details for its facelifted Scénic and Grand Scénic models, UK order books for which will open on February 1 next year, ahead of first deliveries in March.

The revitalised range features sharper designs, the brand debut of two downsized engines and numerous equipment enhancements.

The models have a revised front end and new rear lights. The changes continue with the fitment of LED daytime running lights, gloss black features and chrome details (at the front, plus tailgate strip and side moulding strip), plus a new range of wheel trims and alloy wheels.

Renault's work on driving down emissions, combined with ever-improving fuel economy and performance through smaller cubic capacity engine innovation has borne more fruit.

Following the trend begun by the petrol 1.4 TCe 130 and 1.5 dCi 110, and most recently the arrival of the 1.6 dCi 130, the world's most powerful and frugal diesel engine of its size, facelifted Scenic heralds the arrival of two new engines.

The first, 1.5 dCi 110 Stop & Start, is an enhanced version of the French marque's core diesel engine. Benefitting from several technologies derived from Formula 1 (Stop & Start, brake energy regeneration), it combines record low emissions of 105 g/km (reduced by 23 g/km), and a 12% saving in fuel consumption (up 11.3 mpg to 68.9 mpg), yet higher torque (260 Nm at 1,750rpm; a gain of 20 Nm) compared with the existing 1.5 dCi 110.

From spring 2012, the five- and seven-seater versions of Scénic will also be the first Renaults to receive the new 1.2 TCe 115 petrol engine. Due to gradually replace the 1.6 VVT 110, it has emissions of 135 g/km, 190 Nm of torque (up 39 Nm) and fuel consumption improved by a fifth, up 11.4 mpg to 49.6 mpg.

Joining them will be the 1.6 dCi 130 Stop & Start, which itself boasts 20% better fuel consumption than its former 1.9 dCi 130 stablemate, together with greater performance and even lower emissions.

Scénic and Grand Scénic will be the first Renault models to feature the Visio System by Renault which assists a driver's vigilance and night-time vision thanks to two key functions.

The innovation combines a lane departure warning system (a camera detects if the drivers strays out of lane and triggers an audible signal) and an automatic headlight function (the same camera detects the lights of nearby vehicles and/or the presence of street lighting to automatically switch from dipped to main beam, and vice versa).

Newly introduced standard features across the range include Hill Start Assist and motorway-mode indicators which warn other motorists when the driver is about to change lanes by flashing three times following a flick of the indicator stalk.

Korando crossover leads SsangYong UK sales charge

THE relaunched SsangYong range is now on sale in the UK and is spearheaded by the new Korando crossover with other models also including the Rexton 4x4 and Rodius MPV.

Prices start at £16,995 for the Korando, £14,995 for the seven-seat Rodius MPV and £19,995 for the Rexton off roader. The range is backed by a five-year limitless mileage warranty.

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

Along with a choice of six-speed manual or six-speed automatic transmission, 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.

Standard equipment across the range includes cruise control, ESP with Hill Start Assist and reverse parking sensors.

All Rexton models are fitted with seven seats as standard, while the 4x4 offers space for up to 1,338 litres of luggage.

Rexton is powered by a 2.7 litre five cylinder turbo diesel engine delivering 163 bhp and 340 Nm of torque from 1,800rpm.

Rexton is available in a choice of S and EX trim. The entry level S model comes equipped with ABS, EBD and ESP, as well as automatic climate control and seven seats.

The Rodius can transport seven people and their luggage and has the option of four wheel drive. Electric front and rear windows, fully automatic climate control and a Kenwood audio and Bluetooth system are standard across all variants, as are safety aids including ABS, EBD and ESP.

A Rexton commercial version with 4x4 capability is also available from £16,399 (excluding VAT and on the road charges).

Manufacturer news

Saab under pressure to restructure as court date looms

SAAB'S future has been bleak for months and now the outlook seems even grimmer following the decision of the administrator to apply to the Swedish courts for the termination of the manufacturer's parent company's voluntary reorganisation agreement.

It had been hoped that voluntary reorganisation would enable Saab to continue in business. However, its parent company now has less than a week to submit its plans before the court takes a final decision on reorganisation termination.

A statement from parent company Swedish Automobile N.V. (SWAN) said that it had been informed that the administrator of the reorganisation, Guy Lofalk, would apply for termination of the voluntary reorganisation of Saab Automobile AB (Saab Automobile) and two subsidiaries with the District Court in Vänersborg, Sweden.

The statement continued: 'Saab Automobile and its creditors have approximately five to six days to submit their view to the District Court before the Court takes a final decision about termination of the reorganisation.

'The management of Saab Automobile will consider future steps and continues the current discussions with Youngman about the necessary funding to pay the wages and be able to continue the voluntary reorganisation.'

Chinese manufacturer Geely heads for the UK

CHINESE automotive manufacturer Geely is about to enter the UK's new car market and the first models will arrive at the end of 2012 with user-chooser company car drivers among their targets.

Geely International Corporation has reached agreement with the UK's Manganese Bronze Holdings plc (MBH) to become its distributor for the UK for the sale of new Geely cars, the supply of parts, to establish a dealer network and to provide an after-sales service. The UK distributor operation will be known as Geely Auto UK.

MBH and Geely are already partners in building the iconic London black cabs with production for the UK market taking place in Coventry by The London Taxi Company, a division of MBH, and for world markets vehicles are produced in China by Geely.

John Russell, chief executive officer of MBH said: ‘We are all aware of the success that the Korean brands, Kia and Hyundai have had in the UK and we can work with Geely to achieve similar success in the future.’

Matthew Cheyne, market development director of Geely Auto UK, is heading up the team responsible for the sales, marketing, dealer development and distribution of Geely vehicles in the UK.

He said: ‘We are starting with a clean sheet of paper with the distribution of Geely passenger cars into the UK, the first major Western European country to receive them.

‘We will start by importing the Geely Emgrand EC7, C/D segment sized four-door saloons and five-door hatchbacks, initially with 1.5 and 1.8 litre petrol engine options. But Geely has a comprehensive range of models well suited to European requirements.

‘We will be aiming to widen our range just as quickly as possible, probably at least a new model range every year for the next four to five years.’

Geely cars meet Euro 5 emission standards and will carry a five-year, 100,000 mile warranty.

Cheyne added: ‘The first Emgrand EC7 models to arrive are likely to have a range starting price of approximately £10,000 and we see Geely cars being attractive purchases for retail and business user-chooser customers.

‘At this stage we are not volume driven but we will increase our sales significantly as customers get to know our products and more models are added to the range.

‘Our priority at launch is to have a representative network who wants to work with us to deliver real customer satisfaction.

‘My initial task is to establish a UK dealer network, probably 30 to 40 strong, ready for the brand’s launch. The recruitment process has started and we are looking at small independent owned businesses that know their customers and traditionally give excellent customer service. We will also consider such sales and service outlets as former Rover dealers, sharing dealer sites with other franchises as well as smaller regional Groups.’

Geely Auto UK headquarters will be in Coventry sharing the same offices as The London Taxi Company.

Geely is one of China’s fastest growing car manufacturers and already has numerous automotive interests around the world. One of those is the ownership of the Volvo Car Corporation. However, the new Geely Auto UK distribution company is totally separate from Volvo operations.

BMW to supply diesel engines to Toyota

BMW is to supply 1.6 litre and 2.0 litre diesel engines to Toyota following the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MOU).

The agreement concerns a mid-to-long-term collaboration on next-generation environment-friendly technologies.

Under the MOU, the two companies agreed on a collaborative research in the field of next-generation lithium-ion battery technologies. Furthermore, they have agreed to identify and discuss other possible collaborative projects.

In addition, Toyota Motor Europe (TME) and BMW Group have entered into a contract under which BMW Group is to supply 1.6 litre and 2.0 litre diesel engines to TME starting in 2014.

The engines will be installed in certain Toyota-produced vehicles planned for sale in the European market. Through this agreement, Toyota plans to expand its European line-up and sales of fuel-efficient, low emission diesel-powered vehicles.

Norbert Reithofer, chairman of the Board of Management of BMW AG, said: ‘Toyota is the leading provider of environment-friendly series technology in the volume segment and the BMW Group is the most innovative and sustainable manufacturer of premium automobiles. We are now joining forces to further develop environment-friendly technologies and to expand our innovation leadership in each of our segments.’

‘Supplying Toyota with our fuel efficient and dynamic diesel engines represents another important step in the planned expansion of our sales activities for engines and powertrain systems.’

Representing Toyota Motor Corporation, president Akio Toyoda said: ‘In the spirit of contributing to furthering the development of the auto industry and society, both companies will bring their wide-ranging knowledge - starting with that concerning environmental technologies - to the table and make ever-better cars.’

Fleet demand accelerate Škoda to UK sales record

RECORD fleet registrations have contributed to Škoda UK breaking its previous registrations record in just 11 months of 2011.

In 2010 sales totalled 41,240 registrations and by the end of November sales had accelerated to more than 41,300. Market share has reached 2.3%.

With December sales to come, Škoda UK expects to break through the 45,000 barrier, a goal it has set for itself.

Registrations are strong in both retail and fleet areas, but especially so in fleet, where Škoda UK has set a new record. With over 19,800 fleet registrations, the brand is up over 30% compared to 2010, versus the market rise of 4%.

Robert Hazelwood, Škoda UK brand director, said: ‘This is a new record for Škoda in the UK, but we’re not stopping here. We have another month of trading to come in December, and we’re looking for a very strong finish to the year. We’re looking forward to continuing our momentum into a great start to 2012.’

Toyota names British Gas as EV recharging point partner

TOYOTA has named British Gas as its preferred supplier of electric vehicle charging points, ahead of introducing the new Prius Plug-in Hybrid to the UK market in 2012.

British Gas will be offering Toyota customers - both fleet/business and private buyers - a range of products and services for vehicle recharging, designed to suit individual needs and preferences.

The supplier is in the forefront of vehicle charging technology, and is expected to be the preferred choice for 70% of the national electric vehicle market in 2012.

Prius Plug-in Hybrid is equipped with a lithium-ion battery, which has an electric vehicle driving range of about 14 miles, with zero tailpipe emissions. Beyond the electric driving range, the car can be used as a conventional full hybrid. It can be fully recharged from a standard 240v electricity supply in 90 minutes.

Thanks to its electric vehicle driving range, Prius Plug-in is expected to achieve fuel efficiency of 134.5 mpg and a carbon dioxide emissions figure of 49 g/km (target figures).

British Gas will support those customers wanting to operate the Prius Plug-in with, as a first step, a full free of charge site survey, giving advice on the best way to equip their home for electric vehicle charging. The installation options include a dedicated circuit with a three-pin socket, costing from £275, and a purpose-designed charging unit for safe, easy, fast and future-proof charging, priced from £799.

For peace of mind, the charging unit can be protected by British Gas's Home Electrical Care three-year protection package, which includes unlimited call-outs per contract year for home electrical repairs, including parts and labour.

British Gas will also meet the requirements of business customers, with a range that includes both post and wall-mounted charging points with double sockets. These can be engineered to deliver charging from 3kW to 43kW. In the future this will allow certain electric vehicles to be charged in less than an hour.

Light commercial vehicles

Tougher London LEZ rules help boost van sales

VAN sales continue to rise with the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders crediting the tightening of London Low Emission Zone rules from January for the boom.

Van sales increased 18.6% last month to 22,684 (November 2010: 19,128) to take year-to-date sales to 241,738, up 17.4% on last year's 205,829.

'November saw the commercial vehicle market continue on its upward trend,' said Paul Everitt, SMMT chief executive. 'Both the van and truck market saw growth, reflecting sustained investment in new vehicles by businesses. London's new Low Emission Zone comes into effect on January 3, requiring drivers of older vans and trucks to upgrade their vehicles or pay a daily fee, so we expect to see a boost to registration levels next month and through the early part of 2012.'

Demand for small vans declined with sales of sub-two tonne vans 6% down last month at 3,015 units (November 2010: 3,209), although 2011 registrations are 3.2% up at 42,630 (2010: 41,292).

However, there were increases in sales in all the other weight sectors. Demand for vans in the 2.0-2.5-tonne category soared 36.2% last month to 3,396 (November 2010: 2,494) to take this year's sector registrations to 31,504 (November 2010: 25,429).

Sales of 2.5-3.5-tonne vans increased 13.6% last month to 13,337 units (November 2010: 11,739) to take 2011 volumes to 136,921 (2010: 116,543).

Demand for pick-up vans almost doubled last month to 2,360 units (November 2010: 1,231) to take this year's registrations to 24,461 (2010: 17,757) and 4x4 sales increased 26.6% last month to 576 units (November 2010: 455) to leave 2011 volumes up 29.4% at 6,222 (2010: 4,808).

BVRLA forecasts surge in CV rental as London LEZ rules tighten

THE commercial vehicle rental industry is expecting an upsurge in business following the introduction of new London Low Emission Zone (LEZ) standards from next year.

Businesses or individuals running older, more polluting trucks, vans, minibuses, motorhomes and commercial-use 4x4s could face stiff penalties when entering the zone.

The most cost-effective solution for most of them will be to rent replacement vehicles for occasional trips into Greater London, according to the British Vehicle Rental and Leasing Association.

‘People that travel into London on a regular basis will already have plans to replace older vehicles or fit them with particulate filters,’ said John Lewis, BVRLA chief executive.

But vehicle operators that make very infrequent trips to the capital are at risk of being caught out.

Transport for London (TfL) estimates that the operators of some 75,000 HGVs, buses and coaches and 72,000 light commercial vehicles (LCVs) and minibuses could be affected by new London LEZ standards which come into effect in January 2012.

‘It might not make economic sense for them to buy a new vehicle or spend thousands of pounds on fitting a filter because of one or two trips to London, but they could hire a modern, LEZ-compliant van or truck for a fraction of the cost of paying the LEZ fee,’ added Lewis.

TfL has launched a nationwide advertising campaign to spread awareness of the new standards and the BVRLA has asked its members, who operate thousands of rental outlets across the UK, to spread the message.

LCVs, minibuses, camper vans, commercial-use 4x4s, pick-ups and non-station wagon Land Rover Defenders will be brought into the scope of the LEZ for the first time, with owners having to meet the Euro 3 standard for particulate matter in order to avoid a daily charge of £100. Failure to pay the charge will incur a £500 penalty.

From January 2012, trucks will have to meet the Euro 4 standard for particulate matter in order to avoid a £200 charge. The penalty will be £1,000.

Vans and minibuses registered as new on or after January 1, 2002 and trucks registered as new on or after October 1, 2006 will already meet the new LEZ standards.

Award-winning ING GreenCARE launched to CV market

ING Car Lease has launched phase three of GreenCARE, its award-winning fleet analysis tool.

GreenCARE 3.0 now features commercial vehicle data to help organisations cut their carbon dioxide emissions and fuel costs, while benchmarking performance against ING Car Lease’s ‘average’ and ‘best in class’ fleet performers.

Diarmuid Fahy, head of fleet safety at ING Car Lease, said: ‘With over a million light commercial vehicles under five years old on the UK roads - and many more over the five year bracket - it is important for fleet managers to get a true picture of the performance of their fleet.

‘Company car fleets have found the data and benchmarking available through GreenCARE invaluable in managing costs. We wanted to extend those same benefits to our commercial fleet customers.’

The original GreenCARE product was launched in late 2009, as the industry’s first comprehensive online analysis tool allowing companies to access data on the environmental performance of their fleet. Detailed information on emissions, vehicle manufacturers, fuel type and engine size allows ING Car Lease’s customers to benchmark their fleet performance and work out where savings can be made. The product was awarded the Environment Award in the 2010 Fleet World Honours.

GreenCARE 2.0, which introduced sophisticated scenario planning to the package, was introduced in late 2010. Organisations are able to plot how changes to vehicles - such as adjusting manufacturer and model, engine size and fuel type - affect the fleet’s performance.

GreenCARE 3.0 now allows light commercial vehicle operators access to the same reporting and analysis capabilities, helping them make better-informed decisions when it comes to the management of their fleet.

Renault serves up a new fleet for Interserve

RENAULT has added another 2011 UK fleet win to its burgeoning customer base, this time with Interserve, the international support services and construction group, which has taken delivery of an initial 120 new Renault vehicles for its nationwide fleet.

Interserve has awarded a contract to Renault UK for the supply of more than 400 LCVs following an extensive tender process and review of its commercial vehicle fleet. The new fleet includes the full Renault van range of Kangoo, Trafic and Master, all with the Interserve livery.

Steven Danks, senior buyer for soft services at Interserve, said: 'This deal with Renault ensures we are getting the best deal, not only for our business, but also for our clients. When you consider the size of our fleet, the cost of purchase, road tax and fuel, costs can really add up. We were therefore attracted to Renault as it was not only able to significantly reduce these costs but was also able to provide top-of-the-range vehicles for our employees.'

Residual value update

Toyota Land Cruiser commands the market's best RV in 2011

THE Toyota Land Cruiser has rounded off its 60th anniversary in style by being declared the year's top performer in terms of residual value.

Glass's Guide has calculated Toyota's SUV has held its worth better than any other UK model in 2011, revealing that a 2008 (57 plate) 3.0 litre D-4D Invincible automatic can still command 72.2% of its original on-the-road price.

The top 10 compiled for the year-end would also have included several other Land Cruiser models, had the list not been limited to the highest-ranked example from each model range. Glass's Guide also excluded exotic sports cars sold in very small numbers.

Adrian Rushmore managing editor of Glass's Guide, said: 'The Toyota Land Cruiser has never been a victim of distress marketing by the manufacturer and this has ensured used examples have been in very limited supply. It enjoys the credentials of being a durable and reliable workhorse, an image that has endured for many years.'

The table below shows the top 10 three-year-old cars (58 plate).

Ranking	Manufacturer	Range & derivative	% Residual value (57 plate, 37,000 miles)
1	Toyota	Landcruiser 3.0D-4D (137bhp) Invincible auto	72.2
2	Ford	Kuga 2.0 TDCi (136ps) 2WD Titanium	71.6
3	Audi	Q5 2.0TDI (168bhp) Quattro S Line	71.2
4	Porsche	Cayenne 3.0 TDI V6 (237bhp) Tiptronic S	70.4
5	Volvo	XC 60 2.4 D5 AWD (185ps) SE Lux	68.1
6	Fiat	500 1.2 (69bhp) Pop 3dr Dualogic	67.6
7	Suzuki	Jimny 1.3 (83bhp) JLX 3dr	66.3
8	Volkswagen	Scirocco 2.0 TDI (138bhp) GT Coupe	66.1
9=	Alfa Romeo	MITO 1.4 (95bhp) Turismo 3dr	66.0
9=	Volkswagen	Golf 2.0TDI (140ps) GT 3dr	66.0

Glass's Guide said that it was important to note that each of the above best performers would have their related model derivatives clustered around a similar residual value, albeit at a slightly lower level.

At three years of age there are over 7,700 model derivatives in the entire list with residual values ranging from 72.2% to 15%.

The Land Cruiser displaced the Volkswagen Tiguan from the top of the leader board. However, the Tiguan still has a very respectable showing this year, sitting just outside the top 10, at number 11.

The most notable absentee from the top 10 is the Mini, according to Glass's Guide, which last year took second place, having been fifth in the previous year and the overall winner in 2008. This year it can be found in 22nd place (1.6 Cooper S).

Rushmore concluded: 'Even though the nation is in the grip of austerity measures and the economy remains fragile, customers have not gravitated to affordable budget priced cars in a very big way.

'Instead, we see that the best residual values, which measure the greatest imbalance between high demand and low supply, are reserved for 4x4s and those cars with a strong image. However, decisions to buy these cars are still being made with fuel efficiency in mind.'

Fleets benefit as used car values accelerate, says BCA

WELL balanced supply and demand in November saw average used car values improve by nearly 4% compared to October, according to BCA's latest report.

On average, values rose by £238 (3.9%) to £6,201, the second highest value on record since the market recovered in 2009.

Most of the increase was felt in the part-exchange sector where values improved by over 4% to establish a new record monthly average figure of £2,877. Values also rose in the fleet and lease sector, but by a more modest 1.4%, while nearly-new models dropped in value by 4.1%, largely as a result of model mix in a very low volume sector.

Year-on-year, November 2011 is a substantial £409 (7%) ahead of the same month in 2010, and £298 (5%) ahead of the figure recorded two years ago.

BCA's communications director Tony Gannon said: 'November provided a relatively strong performance, with a good balance between supply and demand leading to improved used car values in the bigger volume sectors of dealer part-exchange and fleet/lease. While there was a fall in the average value of nearly-new cars this was entirely the result of model mix, as supply remains short in the wholesale arena.

'Otherwise, the overall picture remains very similar to the previous month, with healthy demand for Grade 1 and 2 cars, but little appetite for cars in Grade 4 or 5 condition - unless they are realistically valued to sell.'

Fleet values improved in November (after falling in October) and reached £7,388 - a rise of £101 equivalent to 1.4%. CAP performance fell marginally to 96.36% and year-on-year values were ahead by £272 or 3.8%.

Small hatchback used values gain ground as 4x4s falter

AVERAGE used wholesale values of small hatchback cars in both the fleet and dealer part exchange sectors gained ground while values of 4x4s experienced their first decline since August, according to the latest market place analysis from Manheim Remarketing.

Overall average wholesale values in November fell by 1.7% (£122) to £6,848 with the fleet sector down by 2.4% (£145) to £5,794, dealer part exchange values increased by just 0.95% (£21) to £2,369 and manufacturer stock values fell by 1.5% (£188) to £12,749.

Small hatchback values in the fleet sector increased in November by 2.5% (£108) to £4,400 while in the dealer part exchange sector values increased by 3.2% (£60) to £1,945.

Meanwhile the increases in 4x4 values that have been seen since August have finally come to a halt. 4x4 values in the fleet sector fell by 3.7% (£451) to £11,842 while dealer part exchanges 4x4 values fell by 5.8% (£327) to £5,283.

Mike Pilkington, managing director, Manheim Remarketing, said: 'During the last two weeks of November prices and conversions began to ease as we saw the traditional switch of consumer focus from car purchases to Christmas purchases.

'However we are still witnessing some robust performances from around the auction halls with some very respectable results from some of the specialist and manufacturer sales that have been held in November.

'The outlook remains stable with stock numbers set to match the demand through December and there is no doubt that more and more buyers now see December as a time to re-stock rather than de-stock.'

Lex Autolease and BCA stage first ever dedicated hybrid auction

LEX Autolease and BCA are combining to stage the UK's first ever auction dedicated to environmentally friendly hybrid models.

To be held at BCA Blackbushe tomorrow (Friday, December 9), the sale will feature up to 50 hybrid models direct from Lex Autolease, the UK's biggest leasing fleet. Cars such as Toyota Auris and Prius, Honda Civic, CR-Z and Insight and Lexus RX will be on offer.

Full catalogue details are available from the BCA website at www.british-car-auctions.co.uk and every car in the sale will be covered by the BCA Assured programme.

Alan Gupwell BCA corporate account manger for Lex Autolease, said: 'This sale addresses the key issue of supply affecting the hybrid market, because we typically don't see high numbers of these cars reaching the used market.

'With continuing high fuel prices and other economic pressures, motorists are looking very carefully at the running costs of their vehicles. General demand for low emission, high MPG hybrid cars is correspondingly high, and we expect to see significant levels of buyer interest in this sale.'

New Lexus Approved pre-owned locator takes on mobile market

LEXUS has launched the first phase of its all new Approved pre-owned mobile car locator solution as mobile internet traffic continues to grow.

Provided by Manheim Retail Services, which claims to be the UK's leading automotive digital specialist, Lexus has seen mobile access rapidly accelerating this year and approximately 8% of traffic to the Lexus locator is from mobile devices.

The all new solution allows for content and functionality to be optimised for use on mobile devices with use of interactive calls to action to allow customers to phone or message the holding Centre directly.

Andy Simpson, national sales operations manager, Lexus said: 'The mobile locator is the first phase of our Approved pre-owned mobile car locator solution. We expect to launch further enhancements next year, including development for Apple and Android applications, in addition to a bespoke iPad friendly version of the desktop solution.'

John Simpson, managing director, Manheim Retail Services, added: 'Mobile internet users are very likely to overtake desktop users in the not too distant future and we are well placed to capitalise on this major step change in the way the internet is used.'

Politics and regulation

Police launch festive season crackdown on drink and drug drivers

POLICE forces across Britain have launched their annual festive season don't drink and drive campaign, which will run until January 1, 2012.

The campaign, which also focuses on drug-driving, will see police officers throughout the UK carrying out thousands of tests on drivers.

The new Association of Chief Police Officers' lead for roads policing, DCC Suzette Davenport, said: 'If you drink or take drugs and drive it's only a matter of time before you're caught.

'December will see police officers across the country testing drivers at hotspots to help keep local roads safe. Anyone who decides to risk the lives of others leaves themselves open to arrest and prosecution.'

The campaign will see tests carried out at all times of the day and night, including first thing in the morning, as drivers are urged to think twice before getting behind the wheel the morning after drinking.

DCC Davenport continued: 'People often ask how much they can safely have to drink before driving. The simple answer is that the only true safe drink drive limit is none. People must also be made aware that they could still be over the limit the morning after the night before.'

Last year over 170,000 drivers were breath tested during the month-long campaign, with 6,662 arrests made - nearly 4% of those tested.

DCC Davenport added: 'We also want to remind drivers about the consequences of taking drugs and getting behind the wheel. Taking drugs and driving can have serious consequences. Even if you do not kill or seriously injure yourself or someone else, if you get caught you could face heavy fines or a ban, which in some cases could result in losing your job. Why risk your life, the lives and safety of others, and your job?'

Provisional figures suggest that last year saw 250 deaths, 1,230 serious injuries and 9,700 total casualties directly related to drink and drug driving collisions.

DCC Davenport concluded: 'Christmas is a time for family and friends. No police officer wants to have to knock on someone's door and deliver the message that a loved one has died or been seriously injured at the hands of a drink or drug driver. If you drink alcohol or take drugs before driving, we will catch up with you.

'Officers carry out breath tests throughout the year, not just at Christmas, and at all times of the day and night. I am determined to make our roads safer and this starts by removing from our roads those individuals who recklessly drink and drug drive.'

- DESIGNATED drivers will be rewarded in more than 8,000 pubs and student union bars across the country as part of the Government's THINK! campaign. It has teamed up with Coca-Cola's Designated Driver campaign to offer drivers across the country free soft drinks at venues this Christmas as part of the initiative. Drivers can find participating venues using the Coca-Cola 'Pub Finder' tool, either online or via their smart phones, from Friday (December 9).

Budget Day 2012 named

CHANCELLOR of the Exchequer George Osborne has announced that the 2012 Budget will be held on Wednesday, March 21.

General motor industry news

Gridlocked Britain costs 123m working hours and £752m

MORE than 123 million working hours are lost every year as motorists sit gridlocked in their vehicles during their daily commute, according to research commissioned by Churchill Car Insurance.

With more than one in 10 (11%) of those who drive to work reporting that they are at least 40 minutes late every time they are stuck in traffic, it is estimated that the UK economy loses at least £752 million a year as a result of the gridlock.

The average motorist is delayed by 27 minutes at least once a month, which doubles their usual 30 minute journey time. Consequently, those who drive to work are being forced to change their daily routines.

The traditional nine to five is now seemingly a thing of the past, as over half of motorists (51%) arrive at work before 8.30am. For one in five (21%) drivers, the day in the office starts between 5.15am and 7.30am in attempt to beat the traffic.

As well as the early starts, traffic worries result in one in eight (12%) employees working longer hours purely to avoid traffic. A further one in six (15%) say they have been forced to shift their working hours just to avoid driving on congested roads.

It would appear that traffic congestion is not just increasing motorists' workloads, but raising their blood pressure as well. Daily delays cause drivers to worry on the way to work, with one in five (19%) of those who drive to work arriving stressed because of their journey.

Despite the pitfalls of the daily commute, millions of motorists say they have no choice but to brave the roads as, for one in three (30%) workers, there is no feasible alternative form of transport.

'Morning after' drink-drive crashes reach all-time high

NEW data shows drink-drive accidents in the UK are falling but the proportion of 'morning after' drink-drive crashes has reached an all-time high, calling for extra diligence during the Christmas party season, it has been claimed.

'Morning after' drink-driving occurs when someone unintentionally drink-drives the following day after drinking, unaware they still have alcohol in their system and may well be over the drink drive limit.

Analysis of the latest official drink-drive statistics by AlcoSense Breathalysers show in the past decade there has been a nearly 60% increase in the proportion of 'morning after' drink-drive crashes.

A total of 18.2% of all accidents caused by drink-driving in 2010 occurred between 5am, when shift workers and early starters would be driving to work, and 1pm. This compares with only 11.4% in 2000; and only 6.9% in 1990.

While the proportion of drink-drive accidents occurring in the afternoon and evenings have fallen by just over 10% over the past two decades, the proportion of 'morning after' accidents has been steadily rising suggesting the problem is merely being shifted forward to the next day.

Further analysis by AlcoSense shows a sharp increase in the 'morning after' accident rate since 2005 when the licensing laws were relaxed to allow pubs and bars to stay open later.

In the early 2000s 'morning after' drink-driving accidents seemed to have stabilised at around 11% of all drink-drive incidents. After the new licencing laws were passed in 2003 it started to rise, jumping to 13.5% the year the law took effect and then 15.2% in the first full year of the more relaxed regime.

In contrast drink-drive accidents occurring the same evening (between the hours of 7pm to 4am) have decreased from 58% to 47.5% since 1990.

AlcoSense managing director Hunter Abbott said: 'People still believe that a few hours' sleep will get rid of all of the alcohol in their system but it is surprisingly easy to still be over the limit the 'morning after'.

'For example if you drank four pints of medium strong beer or four large glasses of wine between 9pm and midnight, it could take as long as 14.8 hours for the alcohol to leave your system. Therefore you could easily still be over the limit at 11am the following day.'

People on the move

SEAT expands fleet team

SEAT has continued its bid to become a fleet manufacturer of choice by further expanding its fleet and business sales team.

The Spanish brand's regional fleet sales team has doubled, from four fleet sales managers to eight, as it seeks to deliver on its commitment to enhance customer experiences and increase customer loyalty.

Led by new head of fleet Steve Robertson, assisted by national fleet sales manager Sally Livingstone-Dennis, the full team including administrators and support staff now numbers 18 - a six-fold expansion since 2008.

The manufacturer says that investing in talented fleet industry experts is not only the clearest possible indication that the brand is in the fleet business for the long haul, but also demonstrates its determination to continue its recent pattern of strong sales growth in the segment.

In the year to the end of November, SEAT had sold 17,946 cars in the fleet sector for a record 1.9% fleet market share. That's an increase of nearly 20%, or around 3,000 cars, on the same period in 2010 and comes in a fleet market that's up just over 4% this year.

Aside from broadening its fleet team SEAT has also developed additional roles created to focus on precise customer needs.

A specialist sales manager is dedicated to the 'blue light', taxi, chauffeur and conversion markets, while a key account manager focuses on larger end user fleets operating 500+ vehicles. Most recently, SEAT has also added a dedicated fleet aftersales manager.

Meanwhile SEAT's Fleet Business Centre is also expanding as it supports the brand's determination to become a fleet manufacturer of choice. Designed to work as an extension to the SEAT UK fleet and business field sales team and dealer network, it further improves customers' experience of dealing with the brand.

Robertson said: 'Investing in a major expansion of the fleet team in the way that we have should leave no one in any doubt how committed we are to our goals in this area of the market.'

Northgate appoints new operations director

NORTHGATE Vehicle Hire has appointed Dylan Jones as its new UK operations director.

Jones has vast experience in a variety of industries in both operational and commercial roles, and prior to his appointment with Northgate he ran the UK, Italian, French and Spanish B2B operations for Staples for over four years.

Marchionne elected ACEA 2012 president

THE European Automobile Manufacturers Association (ACEA) has elected Sergio Marchionne, chief executive officer of Fiat S.p.A. as well as chairman and CEO of Fiat Group Automobiles S.p.A., as the association's president for 2012.

Following his election by ACEA's board of director, Marchionne said: '2012 will be challenging especially if the instability in the Eurozone would not be addressed. Our association will further focus its work on three main issues: European industrial policy; sustainable mobility and transport; and international trade relations. These issues are all closely linked as the industry's capacity to invest and innovate depends on a strong, competitive manufacturing base in Europe.'

Marchionne takes over from Dieter Zetsche, chairman of the board of Daimler AG and head of Mercedes-Benz Cars Division, who served as ACEA president in 2010 and 2011.

'The European automotive industry is a major employer and invests over €30 billion in research and development per year - more than any other industry in Europe. The importance of our industry must be reflected in the Union's economic, transport and trade policies.'

Garvin appointed to new post at Drive Software Solutions

INTERNATIONAL vehicle leasing systems house, Drive Software Solutions, the company responsible for the DRIVE system in use in major leasing companies around the globe, has appointed Paul Garvin as director of professional services.

The role is focused on changing the way the company delivers professional services to its client base, so that customers get more benefit from the company's knowledge and thus more benefit from its product.

Garvin has a 25-year background in international banking systems and consultancy, having worked at senior programme director level for Deloitte and PA Consulting as well as Raiffeisen Bank Aval, American Express and Sofgen.

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