

This Week's Briefing

Dangerous drivers to face five years jail

Van sales continue to accelerate as confidence returns

Drivers advised to prepare for winter with 'big freeze' due

Used car prices and volumes rise, but conversions falter

LCV values rise sharply as stock shortages continue

Model update: BMW, Chevrolet, Renault, Volkswagen

Defective tyre convictions at four-year high

The Editor's View

THE fleet market is doing its best to keep new car sales moving in 2011, but the truth is that manufacturers and dealers are struggling to meet targets. Following publication of new car sales figures for September - traditionally the second biggest month of the year for new car sales after March - some manufacturers were quick to claim a variety of sales records. But, in reality, the figures from the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders portrayed a market that is struggling. Private sector sales have dropped off the cliff - almost 120,000 units and nearly 15% down year-on-year. Although corporate demand is up, the sector will not be able to consume 'lost' volume from the private sector. The result is that the SMMT expects further market place contraction in the final quarter of this year and has trimmed its 2012 sales forecast. The SMMT has called for 'well targeted' Government incentives to unlock private investment. It is to be hoped that there is no repeat the scrappage scheme, which is perhaps responsible for the current slump as sales were simply pulled forward.

Fleet file

Fleet sales underpin new car market but SMMT cuts 2012 forecasts

STRONG fleet demand underpinned September's registration plate-change new car market, which saw a 0.8% drop in volume compared with 12 months ago.

September sales totalled 332,476 (September 2010: 335,246) to leave 2011 registrations down 5% on last year at 1,553,094 (2010: 1,635,659).

The Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders expects sales to further contract in the final quarter of 2011 and is now forecasting that full year volumes will be 5.3% below 2010 levels at 1.92 million units.

Looking ahead to 2012, the SMMT has cut its new car sales forecast to 1.96 million units from above the two million mark.

Chief executive Paul Everitt said: 'The all-important September market outperformed expectations and is less than 1% below last year at 332,476 units.'

Traditionally, September is the second largest month for new car sales following March when the first registration plate change of the year occurs.

Everitt continued: 'We expected 2011 to be a challenging year. We expected the economy to be growing more strongly but events across the UK and around the world are making people nervous about expenditure and committing to large ticket items.'

'The mood in the industry is not terrible but we are going to go through a quite difficult period when growth is under pressure.'

Everitt said that the forecasted cut in 2012 new car sales was a reflection of the continued weakness in UK domestic demand and the uncertainty across European economies. As a result, the SMMT is encouraging Chancellor of the Exchequer to create 'well targeted' incentives to unlock private sector investment.

Fleet sales last month totalled 156,634, a 7.3% rise on September last year (146,021) to leave segment volumes for the year up 4.1% at 802,928 (2010: 771,455). Business sector sales in September increased 13.4% to 20,707 (September 2010: 18,266) to leave 2011 volumes 1.9% up at 81,684 (2010: 80,154).

Private new car sales fell 9.3% last month to 155,135 (2010: 170,959) to leave annual volumes 14.7% down at 668,482 (2010: 784,050).

SMMT figures reveal that the average new car registered between January and September 2011 had carbon dioxide emissions of 138.5 g/km, down 23.5% from the full year 2000 level of 181 g/km.

The emissions figure has been improved by diesel cars accounting for a growing share of the total market, with 49.9% of the total market over the year-to-date, up from 44.5% a year ago and alternatively-fuelled car registrations also rising to 1.3% market share after a 9.1% rise in volumes - 19,866 models sold in the first nine months of 2011 compared with 18,211 in the same period last year.

The Ford Fiesta was the best selling model in both September and is the best-seller year-to-date.

SEAT said that its share of the hard-fought fleet market soared to a record 2.5% and 3,830 sales last month - more than double September 2010 fleet volumes.

The manufacturer claimed that its 'momentous' September sales surge underlined the success of its drive to become a 'significant force' in the UK fleet market. Its strategy to become a fleet manufacturer of choice was launched in late 2009, and the company says its campaign continues to draw in fleet and business customers attracted by a compelling mix of style, quality and desirability. Recent recruits to the SEAT fleet client list include Barclays Bank and National Grid.

SEAT UK national fleet sales manager Sally Livingstone-Dennis said: "The economic climate, and outlook for business, may be mixed but that simply means fleet customers will be focusing more intently than ever on the best possible value. SEAT is ideally placed to provide that."

Škoda says it sold more new cars last month - more than 7,000 - than ever before, a 30% increase when compared with the same period in 2010.

September was also a new benchmark for the brand in the fleet sector, with more than 3,500 cars delivered to business users. The marque's fleet registrations have already exceeded 16,500 vehicles so far this year with a record fleet market share of 2.3%.

Meanwhile, strong business demand helped Kia record increased sales compared to 2010 in the September market. The brand sold 9,729 vehicles in September, up almost 18% over September 2010's total of 8,257. Kia's business and fleet sales totalled 4,892 units, up 55% compared to September last year.

Finally, Hyundai, Kia's sister company, saw September sales jump 37.1% compared with 12 months ago with a registration record for a single month of 11,562 vehicles.

Sales and marketing concentration on larger fleets diminishes returns

A CONCENTRATION on sales and marketing to larger fleets is creating diminishing returns for fleet suppliers, according to MIB Data Solutions.

The company, which supplies a wide range of data about UK fleets to motor manufacturers, leasing companies and others in the fleet sector, says that small fleets are being neglected in favour of the above 50-plus vehicle sector.

Nick Boddington, managing director, said: 'In difficult economic conditions, suppliers want to give themselves the best possible chance of achieving worthwhile results so they have tended in recent years to concentrate on larger fleets, reasoning that if they win a deal, it will be really worthwhile.'

'However, they have been following this policy for some time and, as a result, larger fleets are becoming more and more resistant to sales and marketing approaches. There are only a relatively small number of fleets with more than, say, 250 cars and vans, and they are being pursued by a large number of suppliers.'

A much more effective strategy at this point in time is to target a mix of fleets of all sizes with messages and offers appropriate to the size and type of company, added Boddington.

He said: 'We are seeing some of our more progressive clients starting to undertake properly targeted campaigns aiming at fleets in the 5-50 vehicle sector. These are still worthwhile accounts to win but are more open to dialogue than larger fleets.'

'Over the last few months, we have been updating our data for fleets of this size and the quality of information now available is excellent, so we are starting to see some suppliers produce good results from it.'

Total launches dedicated grey fleet management product

TOTAL Accident Management has launched a joined up range of accident management, risk management and administration services for the thousands of companies with grey fleet drivers - employees who drive their own cars on business.

It aims to ensure fleets keep track of service records, MoTs and drivers' licences for private vehicles, as well as ensuring employees have the appropriate business use insurance, plus keeping tabs on work journeys undertaken.

Total will also manage all aspects of grey fleet driver's accidents, keep them mobile in a hire car and ensure their vehicle is repaired quickly and cost effectively to the highest of standards.

Everything, says the company, about the new product, called Total DriveSecure, aims to ensure both car and driver comply with the law while the company meets its duty of care requirements.

Total, which has worked in conjunction with fleet management company, TR Fleet, to deliver the product is aiming its new service at corporate, public utilities and SMEs which employ tens of thousands of employees using their own car on company business.

‘Working with TR Fleet means we can offer customers the complete package, helping companies support their internal fleet of grey fleet drivers,’ said Penny Stoolman, Total’s managing director.

Julie Boyd, managing director of TR Fleet and chairman of the Midland Region of ACFO, the UK’s premier organisation for fleet decision-makers, said: ‘Effectively and efficiently managing the grey fleet continues to be an administrative nightmare for employers with many walking a health and safety tightrope.’

At the heart of the product is Total’s SME online booking and claims management system which is already in use with LeasePlan. This system has been tried and tested over the past 18 months with services like licence checking and driver training being added to the core system, allowing everything to be managed 100% online with a range of management information accessible to the fleet customer around the clock.

TR Fleet’s DriveSecure product supports not only grey fleet drivers, but the wider employee base who drive on business, including company car and van drivers, salary sacrifice and cash allowance takers. The product delivers driver centric solutions designed to assist employers meet their duty of care requirements in respect of work related road safety.

Driver acceptance of duty of care is higher with bespoke systems

COMPANY drivers take online risk assessments and e-driver training more seriously if they can see that the system is meaningful and relevant to them and their company, it is claimed.

Jonathan Mosley, director - sales and marketing of fleet risk management specialists E-Training World, says the greater the relevance to the driver, the better the buy-in.

‘Our feedback reports show a clear and very positive correlation between good driver feedback and bespoke systems,’ said Mosley.

‘If a driver logs into an online risk assessment and there is an opening statement which is specifically about their company and its duty of care, then the question sets are written in a way that uses terminology which is personal to their business and relevant to the drivers, we find that driver engagement is far better.

‘This is why, particularly for larger fleet operators, we provide them with the ability to add their own company introductions, they can tailor questions to include phrases or company descriptions that will be meaningful to drivers and they can include their own images; for example, pictures of their own vans if it is a commercial vehicle fleet. They can even add video clips of senior managers explaining the process to drivers and why it is important within the assessment system.

‘Better still, with our e-modular training, companies can not only decide on bespoke topics to train their drivers on, for example the company’s own policy on vehicle checks, they can also add their own video explanations to this system too.

‘The overall impact is that drivers feel that their employer has taken far more care in creating a system for them which goes a long way to improving driver engagement.’

New study claims texting doubles a driver’s reaction time

A DRIVER’S reaction time is doubled when distracted by reading or sending a text message, according to a new study by researchers at the Texas Transportation Institute at Texas A&M University.

The study reveals how the texting impairment is even greater than many experts believed, and demonstrates how texting drivers are less able to react to sudden roadway hazards.

In addition to the reaction-time element, researchers also measured each driver’s ability to maintain proper lane position and a constant speed.

Major findings further documented the impairment of texting when compared to the controlled driving conditions. Drivers were less able to:

- Safely maintain their position in the driving lane when they were texting and their swerving was worse in the open sections of the course than in barrelled sections.
- Maintain a constant speed while texting, tending to slow down in an effort to reduce the demand of the multiple tasks. By slowing down, a driver gains more time to correct for driving errors (such as the tendency to swerve while texting). Speed variance was also greater for texting drivers than for non-texting drivers.

The fact that the study was conducted in an actual driving environment was important, the researchers said. While simulators are useful, the dynamics of an actual vehicle are different, and some driver cues can't be replicated in a simulator, said researchers. The total distance covered by each driver in the study was slightly less than 11 miles.

Ed Dubens, CEO at safe driving experts Interactive Driving Systems, said: 'Driver distraction has been an emerging issue in United States driver safety research and practice over the last few years, this study emphasises the reasons why organisations requiring their drivers to travel for work purposes should take the issue very seriously as part of their worker health, wellbeing and safety programs.'

Federal statistics suggest that distracted driving contributes to as much as 20% of all fatal crashes, and that cell phones constitute the primary source of driver distraction.

New company car and van tax guide published

LEADING fleet industry consultant Professor Colin Tourick has published a new guide to company car and van taxation.

The '*Company Car & Van Tax 2011-12*' book has been published in association with contract hire and leasing company ALD Automotive and professional services organisation KPMG.

The book covers everything a fleet manager or company vehicle driver needs to know about tax, including car benefit tax, fuel benefit tax, VAT, income tax, corporation tax, capital allowances, fuel duty, Vehicle Excise Duty and national insurance contributions. The publisher claims it to be the only book currently available on the topic.

The book will be available in the next few weeks from www.tourick.com and good bookshops, priced £40. It is available as an ebook (pdf download) now.

In addition, Tourick has updated his textbook on vehicle management and leasing. A comprehensive guide for the beginner and expert, the third edition of '*Managing Your Company cars*' is published by Eyelevel Books in association with ALD Automotive and includes a new chapter on taxation which has been developed in conjunction with KPMG. Costing £60 it can be ordered now at www.tourick.com.

Peak Performance offers free advice for fleet managers

FLEET driver training specialist Peak Performance is offering free places to fleet decision makers, on a first come, first served basis, for a series of driver education workshops in November.

Entitled '*Fuel for Thought*', the classroom sessions will discuss a range of simple and practical techniques which business drivers can adopt on a daily basis to save significant amounts of fuel.

The workshops are taking place at: Guildford, Tuesday, November 8, 2pm start; Birmingham, Thursday, November 10, 2pm start; and Chesterfield, Tuesday, November 15, 2pm start.

For more information contact Lucy Boler in customer services at lucy.boler@peakperformance.net or on 01246 244200.

Model update

Third generation BMW 6 Series Coupé enters UK showrooms

THE all new, third generation BMW 6 Series Coupé goes on UK sale on Saturday (October 15) with on-the-road prices starting at £59,565 for the 640i SE and topping out at £71,840 for the 650i M Sport.

The six-model range is available with a choice of two turbocharged petrol engines and a twin-turbocharged diesel with BMW's EfficientDynamics technologies as standard across the range including all-new ECO PRO fuel saving mode.

A 320 bhp engine with combined cycle fuel economy of 36.2 mpg and emissions of 181 g/km powers the 640i, a 4.4 litre 407 bhp unit with fuel economy of 26.6 mpg and emissions of 246 g/km powers the 650i and the 640d is powered by a 313 bhp powerplant returning 51.4 mpg with emissions of 145 g/km. An eight-speed sport automatic gearbox is standard fitment on all three models.

The 2+2 Coupé features a sweeping roofline and a long bonnet, short over-hangs, set-back passenger compartment with Hofmeister kink, long wheelbase and flat waistline.

Longer, lower and wider, the new car is larger in every dimension than its predecessor except height, where it now stands half a centimetre closer to the ground. At 4,894mm in length, the new model is 74mm longer than its predecessor, while the wheelbase has stretched similarly, to 2,855mm. The car has also grown by 39mm in width, and now measures 1,894mm across, while 5mm have been shaved off its height.

The new Coupé is claimed by BMW to be available with the highest ever level of standard specification on a Six.

Standard for the 640i Coupé and 640d Coupé are 18-inch light alloy wheels, while the 650i Coupé comes as standard with a 19-inch light alloy wheel. All derivatives feature Dakota leather upholstery, electric seat adjustment with memory, BMW Professional Multimedia Navigation system, xenon headlights, LED front fog lights and front and rear park distance control.

The M Sport package adds the M aerodynamic body-styling package, 19-inch M light alloy wheels, dark chrome exhaust tailpipes, high-gloss shadowline exterior trim and black brake 8 callipers. Inside anthracite headlining, aluminium hexagon trim, sport seats and M Sport multifunction leather rimmed steering wheel are fitted.

At the same time as M Sport and the 640d derivative come to the UK for the Coupé, the 6 Series Convertible can now also be specified with M Sport.

Renault reveals pricing for third version of Twizy EV

THE third trim level of Renault's electric two-seat Twizy will go on sale in the UK in March next year and will cost from £6,690 on-the-road with battery hire from £40.

The new Colour version will sit between the previously announced trim levels, Urban and Technic. Its list price means that it is pitched at £260 more than the entry-level Urban and £450 less than the top-of-the-range Technic.

Colour comes with white bodywork and a choice of urban blue, ivy green or flame orange panels for the roof and sides. Black bodywork is also available with orange panels for a more striking look.

The same hues are continued through to its upholstery and glovebox and can be specified on colour-coordinated, diamond-effect alloy wheels which cost £350. Colour-coordinated half-scissor doors will be available for £455.

Standard equipment on Twizy includes 13-inch wheels, two gloveboxes, one of which is lockable, a three-metre long charging cable, heated tinted windscreen, onboard computer and dashboard with econometer and battery consumption display, three-point seatbelt in the front with additional lateral restraint, three-point seatbelt in the rear, front airbag and immobiliser and steering lock.

The two-seater is capable of up to 50 mph and full charge takes three and a half hours, providing a range of up to 60 miles on the urban cycle. The cost of monthly battery hire is based on three years and 4,500 miles per year.

Reservations for Twizy can now be made at www.renault-ze.com.

Order books open for new Volkswagen Up!

ORDER Books have opened for the six-model Volkswagen Up city car range, which will be arriving in showrooms in September.

On-the-road prices start at £7,995 for the 1.0 60 PS five-speed manual in Take up trim and extend to £11,180 for both the 1.0 litre 75 PS five-speed manual in Up Black trim and the 1.0 litre 75 PS five-speed manual in Up White trim. There are also trim levels called Move Up and High Up.

The 1.0 litre offers a choice of 60 PS or 75 PS outputs and there is a 1.0 BlueMotion engine that offers emissions of 97 g/km and combined cycle fuel economy of 67.2 mpg.

Launched as a three-door car, a five-door version is expected to join the line-up in the second half of 2012.

New Chevrolet Aveo set for New Year launch

THE all-new Chevrolet Aveo is set to arrive in showrooms next January with on-the-road prices starting at £9,995 for the 1.2 LS model and rising to £13,615 for the 1.3 LTZ VCDi 95 PS derivative.

The model draws on sister cars such as the Camaro and Corvette, for its styling influence, with cues such as the round headlamps and dual-cockpit interior.

Standard specification includes remote locking, a rear spoiler, CD-stereo radio, electrically adjustable heated door mirrors and electric front windows. Eight models are available across the range embracing three trim levels - LS, LT and LTZ.

Four engines will be available from launch - a 1.2 litre petrol unit developing 86 PS, a 1.4 litre petrol engine with 101 PS or two 1.3 litre diesels, with power outputs of either 75 or 95 PS. All come with a five-speed manual gearbox as standard, while the 1.4 litre models have the option of a six-speed automatic.

[Manufacturer news](#)

BMW claims industry first with real-time traffic information

BMW drivers are to become the first in the world to benefit from an advanced traffic information system giving fast, accurate and reliable data about road conditions on their journeys.

Real Time Traffic Information (RTTI) is an enhanced BMW ConnectedDrive feature designed available on all new BMW models and comes at no additional cost when customers order the BMW Professional navigation system and Bluetooth telephone preparation with telematics.

As a further benefit, BMW drivers can also view RTTI remotely when planning their routes within their BMW Routes website.

Until now owners have had to rely on the radio-based Traffic Message Channel (TMC) for information on traffic disruptions, but, says BMW, information is not always fast or accurate enough to help steer clear of delays ahead.

RTTI is claimed to provide a precise account of current traffic situations in real time. The new system provides an alternative to TMC as the information presented is based on significantly greater sources of data.

The system also provides superior accuracy as road networks can be divided into distances as short as 500 metres and the information is automatically updated every three minutes.

Furthermore, when the destination guidance is active the system also monitors traffic flow away from the predetermined route to calculate which route is the most time efficient and can actually recommend for or against alternatives.

Coverage includes all major road networks and motorways in the UK as well as pan-European networks for journeys abroad.

Mazda to halt rotary engine production

MAZDA is to stop making cars with its fabled rotary engine after 45 years due to the uneconomic cost of ensuring they meet today's emission standards.

First introduced 44 years ago, the rotary engine is being used for the final time in a special edition of the RX-8, which will go on sale in Japan next month with production ending in June next year.

However, although RX-8 production is coming to an end, Mazda says that it is committed to the ongoing development of the rotary engine.

Light commercial vehicles

Van sales continue to accelerate as confidence returns

CONFIDENCE continues to return to the commercial vehicle sector, according to the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, with sales of light vans up 9.4% in September.

Registrations of light vans up to 3.5 tonnes totalled 38,644 last month (September 2010: 35,309) to take annual sales to 199,684, up 18.5% on last year's nine-month total of 168,554.

SMMT chief executive Paul Everitt said: 'Confidence returned to the commercial vehicle market in 2011 and the September market continues the upward trend. The future state of the economy is certainly a concern, but it's clear that owners and operators are currently investing in new, fuel-efficient vehicles to help weather the storm of high fuel prices.'

The monthly SMMT figures reveal that the van market has performed strongly throughout the year with sales of two tonne-plus vehicles in particular demand as the changing requirements of the market continued to play out and London Low Emission Zone considerations pushed operators of older vehicles to upgrade.

However, the 'squeezed middle' 3.5 to six tonne portion of the rigid market continued to decline in September as operators combined heavy trucks and large vans to handle operations traditionally carried out by this market sector.

Last month sales of sub-two tonne vans dropped 6.9% year-on-year to 6,456 (September 2010: 6,934) - the only portion of the light van market to drop - but 2011 sales remain up 2.9% at 36,543 (2010: 35,502).

Registrations of midsize vans (2.0-2.5 tonnes) jumped 22.5% last month to 4,632 (September 2010: 3,781) to take year-to-date sales to 25,295, up 21% on last year's 20,898. Sales of 2.5-3.5-tonne models increased 10.8% last month to 22,451 (September 2010: 20,261) with 2011 sales up 20.5% at 112,214 (2010: 93,088).

Demand for pick-up vans rose 23.2% in September with sales totalling 4,015 (September 2010: 3,258) to leave year-to-date sales up 35% at 20,409 (2010: 15,116), while 4x4 registrations rose 1.4% last month to 1,090 (September 2010: 1,075) to take annual sales to 5,223, up 32.2% on last year's nine-month total of 3,950.

CV Show 2012 looks set to be a sell-out

CONFIDENCE is building that the 2012 CV Show and its dedicated Workshop zone will be a sell-out on the strength of rising truck and van sales and the service and repair sector serving a busy road transport business.

Around 35% more exhibitors have booked stands compared to this time last year and, according to David Crawford, sales manager for the Show's sales and marketing team at Crystal Communications, bookings are being received on a daily basis.

'Indications are that the industry is determined to up its game, despite the doom merchants in consumer media. With many new light and heavy vehicle launches and the oncoming impact of Euro6 technology, there can be no better way for operators to keep up with what's new in transport, logistics and distribution,' said Crawford.

The 2012 Show will occupy four halls of the NEC Birmingham from April 24 to 26, covering some 44,000 square metres and showcasing in excess of 400 exhibitors.

Tayside fire appliances ready for action with Mercedes-Benz Sprinter

TAYSIDE Fire & Rescue is operating Mercedes-Benz mobile service vans in place of another manufacturer's vehicles after identifying downtime issues.

Fleet manager Scott Roberts recalled: 'On average, our previous vans were off the road 20-25% of the time. We therefore conducted an extensive evaluation before deciding to purchase a Mercedes-Benz Sprinter.

'And in the three years we ran it that vehicle never had a single unscheduled day off the road, which means we effectively slashed our downtime to 0% overnight.'

Like its predecessor, the new Sprinter is kitted out as a mobile workshop and used to maintain Tayside Fire & Rescue's fleet of frontline appliances. Supplied by Dundee dealer John R. Weir Truck & Van, the 319CDI Long is powered by a range-topping 190 bhp V6 engine.

The van is based at Tayside Fire & Rescue's headquarters in Dundee, but covers a large area of more than 7,000 square kilometres, with stations as far afield as Kinloch Rannoch, Glenshee, Montrose and Kinross.

During the day the Sprinter visits fire stations to carry out planned maintenance on the fleet of 51 water tenders and 15 specialised vehicles. But it is also on 24-hour call across the region to deal with emergency repairs.

Residual value update

Used car prices and volumes rise, but conversions falter

THE combination of supply issues and seasonal demand in September saw used car values climb for the second month, according to BCA's latest report.

On average, values increased by £364 (6.2%) to £6,252 from £5,888, the first time the £6,000 benchmark has been surpassed since 2009. Unsurprisingly values rose in all three key sectors of fleet/lease, dealer part-exchange and nearly new.

With average values also rising strongly in August, in two months values have climbed by nearly 11%.

Year-on-year, September 2011 is £314 (5.3%) ahead of the same month in 2010, and is £35 (0.5%) ahead compared to two years ago, when the market peaked.

The figures come against a backdrop of a new car market that is continuing to slow, with September falling 0.8% to 332,476 units - one of the lowest volumes recorded since twice yearly registrations were established in 1999.

Fleet values continued to improve for the second month running, having fallen for six consecutive months from February onwards. Month-on-month values improved by £335 to £7,557 in September from £7,222, while CAP performance improved by two points to 99.3%. Year-on-year values are adrift by £54 or 1.9%.

BCA's communications director Tony Gannon said: 'Although September 2011 has seen the first big value rise recorded this year, much of this is due to supply issues as buyers compete for the best quality stock.

'September is typically one of the best performing months in the annual cycle, but this is the first time we have really seen that trend re-emerge since the recession started in 2008.

'The past month saw a good level of interest from professional buyers, but as entries increased by around 13% over the month, conversion rates faltered, dropping by around nine points. Sold volumes increased by around 5%, with much of that increase coming from the part-exchange sector. This increase in entries means that professional buyers finally have access to a wider range of stock, following the relative product drought experienced during much of 2011.'

Gannon added: 'While September has brought more good news for vendors, history and the longer term prospects suggest that we will see more pressure on average values and conversion rates between now and the end of the year.

'There is very little to suggest that hard-pressed household budgets are going to improve in the months ahead, which means less disposable income available to change or upgrade the family car. While there will always be activity in the used car market caused by changes in lifestyle the continuing pressure on consumer funds must impact the retail sector, which in turn will affect wholesale demand.'

New car production eases to help solve used model shortage

AN increasing number of deflected vehicles are returning to the used car market as vehicle production moves up a gear following the impact of the spring Japanese tsunami and earthquake, according to the Vehicle Remarketing Association (VRA).

In overall terms the used vehicle market in September and into early October has been quite strong with values reflecting reasonable retail demand against the continuing relative shortage of stock, says the VRA. Sale conversion rates in both physical and online channels are also up on the summer months.

However, with new car deliveries starting to return to normality following the well-publicised supply disruption, both fleets and private motorists are releasing much needed used vehicles back into the market.

Supply of nearly new stock from manufacturer's activity remains quite low and that is creating healthy trade demand for late plate vehicles, says the VRA. It is also underpinning the values of two to three year cars with sensible mileages, which are being fought over by both franchised and independent dealers alike.

The leasing sector, particularly, is currently reporting strong demand with prices averaging close to 100% CAP 'clean' in September.

However a general weakening in both auction conversion rates and values is expected in the weeks ahead, as more ex-leasing volumes return to market through October and November. That sentiment is also supported by the main price publishers who are predicting higher volumes in the short term, with a corresponding drop in values of 1% to 2 %.

The VRA says that the light commercial vehicle market continues unabated with high demand for used vans reflecting the current strong prices being achieved.

Behind this phenomenon has been the shortage of good light commercials, but also that many smaller businesses, ordinarily buyers of new vans, are still finding lines of credit hard to access and consequently turning to better-value used vans in the interim.

Couple that to the demand from a reasonably buoyant self-employed, jobbing sector and the result is a highly competitive market.

Any fleet operator that has extended their current replacement cycles for vans could do worse than replace their vehicles in this current environment, says the VRA.

LCV values rise sharply as stock shortages continue

AVERAGE LCV values reached their highest point for 16 months in September, as the combined effect of stock issues and high demand saw values rise sharply, according to BCA's latest data.

Figures for September show that average values increased by £353 (8.7%) to £4,409 from the £4,056 recorded in August. The increase reversed a run of three consecutive month-on-month falls.

Unsurprisingly, all three sectors - fleet and lease, dealer part-exchange and nearly-new values - increased in value month-on-month.

With stock remaining in short supply and ongoing strong buyer demand, conversion rates remained at high levels, with many vendors continuing to enjoy 100% conversions in individual sales sections.

Performance against guide prices remained exceptionally strong, with values across the board improving from 103% to 106% in September, with all three sectors of fleet/lease, dealer part-exchange and nearly-new achieving well over 100% for the second month running. Year-on-year values are ahead by £263, equivalent to a £400 plus positive swing over the month as values were behind by more than £150 in August.

Values in the fleet and lease LCV sector broke through the £5,000 barrier for the first time since May 2010, when the market last peaked. Values rose by £390 to reach £5,041 (up by 8.4%), while year-on-year values were ahead by £159 (3.3%). Fleet vans averaged 105.5% of CAP in September, nearly a two point increase over August.

Duncan Ward BCA's general manager - commercial vehicles, said: 'We were confident to predict last month that September would see values rising, but the level of increase has been even greater than we expected.'

'We saw slightly more vans from corporate fleet sources in September, but demand is still outstripping supply. As a result the average value increase in the fleet and lease sector was nearly £400 compared to August.'

He added: 'Trade buyers are having to look further afield to secure the stock they need and we have seen a significant uplift in the numbers logging onto BCA Live Online and our Bid Now/Buy Now internet platforms. Many are looking at older, higher mileage vehicles or even damaged stock to satisfy their buying requirements. As a direct consequence we have also seen values rise in the dealer P/X sector, while demand for the very few late year, low mileage LCVs remains intense.'

4x4 prices rise as winter looms

VALUES of 4x4 vehicles have already started to rise and will climb further as winter weather takes hold, with severe conditions predicted across much of the UK, says BCA.

September saw the value of four wheel drives begin to climb sharply, with prices now getting close to those seen in January and February this year. The average value for all 4x4s sold by BCA in September rose to £12,805 from £12,509 in August and £10,381 in July.

September recorded the second highest average 4x4 value so far this year and there is every indication that values will rise further in the colder months ahead, according to the auction giant.

A spokesman said: 'Although we had an unusually warm September, prices have already started rising and the first hint of snow and severe winter conditions could see significant demand for all-weather vehicles which will send values sky high.'

BCA takes multi-million pound prestige car sale to next level

BCA is doubling its Top Car programme in the Midlands with the introduction of a second sale every month at the Nottingham centre to meet continuing demand for prestige and executive vehicles,

BCA UK operations director Simon Henstock said: 'BCA Nottingham has long been established as the premier Midlands location to remarket high value stock and this additional monthly sale reflects the demand from both our buyer and seller customers to expand this successful platform.'

Henstock added: 'It is a peculiarity of the economic downturn that demand for high value cars has increased significantly over the past 20 or so months. Despite the difficult economic conditions, the market for high value prestige vehicles is exceptionally buoyant, with buyers prepared to invest six-figure sums for the right vehicle.'

'It could be that some well-heeled buyers are simply deciding that their money might as well be put to good use on a prestige car rather than languishing in a savings account that is paying very little interest.'

Selling customers include Alphabet GB, Bentley Financial Services, BMW Group Financial Services, Jaguar Financial Services and UKcgr.com.

Starting this month, Nottingham's Top Car Sales are taking place twice a month on Mondays and Thursdays.

eAuction sales channel launched by Manheim Remarketing

EAUCTION is the latest sales channel for registered trade buyers to be launched by Manheim Remarketing, offering up to 150 fresh used vehicles every Monday afternoon.

The selected vehicles will be less than six years old, inspected and in grade C or above condition, with warranted mileage of less than 100,000 miles and with full service history details and a V5c.

The eAuction runs from 3-5pm and includes a time extension if any bids are made in the last two minutes giving buyers more time to place a winning bid to secure the vehicle.

Trade buyers will be able to place bids in several ways and also to bid on more than one vehicle. If a buyer wants to place a bid before the eAuction has started, a proxy bid can be placed on as many vehicles as desired. The proxy bid system will then bid up to the selected amount. If the eAuction has started, buyers following online can place incremental bids on the vehicles they are interested in. Alternatively, buyers can enter their maximum bid and the eAuction software will bid automatically on their behalf, up to that amount, as bids are placed by other buyers.

Jonathan Holland, director UK & EU online products and services, said: 'eAuction is a quick and convenient way to buy vehicles online, giving trade buyers easy access to a great selection of used vehicles within a fixed time period, while maintaining a real bidding experience.'

BCA claims remarketing industry first with QR code launch

BCA is claiming a remarketing industry first with the introduction of QR ('quick response') codes to marketing and point of sale material throughout its UK network.

QR codes allow anyone with a smart phone/mobile device to scan the code, which then loads data onto their device.

BCA is producing codes on printed monthly sales guides, daily catalogues, sale centre posters and banners - and once scanned the codes direct mobile devices to the BCA website where the appropriate sales programme or catalogue information is displayed. QR code reader software is widely available for most mobile devices and is generally free to install.

It means buyers can quickly and easily access more detailed online information about specific sales, see individual vehicle catalogue listings and view appraisal reports and other pertinent data.

Keith Rountree, BCA's head of marketing, said: 'This new initiative from BCA will help our customers keep up to date with every aspect of BCA's comprehensive remarketing campaigns via their mobile devices.'

'The reaction from our vendor customers has been extremely positive and we are actively working with a number of our sellers to develop new and innovative ways of promoting their vehicles to an even wider audience of buyers.'

Politics and regulation

Dangerous drivers to face five years jail

THE Government is set to introduce a new offence of 'causing serious injury by dangerous driving' which could carry a five-year jail term.

The offence is aimed at addressing the gap that exists in current legislation between the offences of dangerous driving, which is punishable with up to two years in prison, and causing death by dangerous driving, which carries a maximum 14-year prison term.

Justice Secretary Kenneth Clarke says that the views of the victims of dangerous drivers, their families, MPs, judges and road safety groups have influenced the move.

The new offence is to be included within the Government's Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders' Bill, which is currently making its way through Parliament.

Clarke said: 'Making our roads safer is a priority - five people died on our roads each day last year, so we need to do everything we can to further improve safety.'

Ellen Booth, from road safety charity Brake, which supports bereaved and seriously injured victims of road crashes, said: 'This new offence finally means that serious injury is recognised within the title of the offence, and this recognition is vitally important to victims and their families.'

A spokesman for the Institute of Advanced Motorists said: 'Dangerous driving can result in anything from near misses to serious injuries. But the maximum jail term for dangerous driving must relate to the driving offence - not the consequences, however awful.'

Figures produced by the IAM from Department for Transport data represent the number of accidents caused last year by various types of dangerous driving activity:

- 18,803 accidents were caused by careless, reckless or hurried driving.
- 3,862 accidents were caused by aggressive driving.
- Aggressive, careless, reckless or hurried driving caused at least one death a day.
- 5,858 accidents were caused by drivers impaired by drugs or alcohol, resulting in 160 deaths.
- A significant 32,525 accidents were caused by illegal manoeuvres such as exceeding the speed limit, illegal turns, disobeying traffic signals and disobeying rules pedestrian crossings.
- 14 deaths and 139 serious accidents involved a stolen vehicle.

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents says that it is pleased that the new offence of causing serious injury by dangerous driving has been announced for England and Wales.

Kevin Clinton, RoSPA's head of road safety, said: 'RoSPA has previously called for the offence of causing death by dangerous driving to be extended to cover causing serious injury, so we welcome the announcement of a new offence of 'causing serious injury by dangerous driving'.

'Serious injuries often cause life-long disability for the victims of bad drivers and can fundamentally affect their quality of life and that of their families.

'To ensure this new law works as intended, it will be absolutely crucial to ensure that it is applied consistently in terms of prosecution and sentencing.

'We also believe that the offences of causing death by careless driving and causing death by careless driving under the influence of drink or drugs should include causing serious injury.'

Defective tyre convictions at four-year high

COURT convictions in England and Wales for driving on defective tyres are at a four year high, according to figures obtained by TyreSafe from the Ministry of Justice and the Home Office.

In 2010, 10,475 motorists were successfully convicted - almost 1,000 more than the previous year (9,513) and around 1,300 more than in 2008.

The figures, says the not-for-profit tyre safety organisation, highlight the scale of the problem of illegal tyres in the UK, especially as they do not take into account tyre related matters dealt with by the police at the roadside.

‘These latest figures are very worrying indeed and show that the courts take a very dim view of people driving on defective tyres,’ said TyreSafe chairman Stuart Jackson.

‘We are aware that with recent financial pressures, many motorists are delaying the purchase of new tyres, however, as these latest figures show, some are waiting far too long and are risking their own safety and that of other roads users by going beyond the legal minimum standards.

‘It also shows that the authorities are taking a robust stance against motorists prepared to flout the law, which goes to show that if you drive on illegal tyres, then be prepared to pay the price.’

Current UK law requires car drivers to have a minimum of 1.6mm tread depth across the central three quarters of the tyre, around its entire circumference. Drivers who fail to comply with the regulations face a fine of up to £2,500 and three penalty points for each illegal tyre.

RoSPA conducts clock change poll as evenings darken

THE Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents is calling for drivers to put a stop to ‘daylight robbery’ with the launch of an online poll.

For decades, RoSPA has been at the forefront of a crusade to give the UK an extra hour of evening daylight - citing research that shows lighter nights would save 80 lives and prevent more than 200 serious injuries on our roads each year.

Apart from the avoidance of grief and suffering, fewer road accidents would also bring considerable annual savings to taxpayers, says the organisation.

The poll has been launched on the back of an impassioned blog by the safety charity’s chief executive, Tom Mullarkey - visit <http://safetygoesane.wordpress.com/2011/10/11/lighting-up-time/>.

The clock change campaign, says RoSPA, is closer to succeeding now than at any time since 1970, thanks to MP Rebecca Harris’s Private Members’ Bill - which passed its second reading in Parliament in December with a huge majority.

To help the Bill clear the next hurdle - and to coincide with the end of British Summer Time in a couple of weeks - RoSPA is calling on the public to help convince Westminster of its popularity. People can do that by clicking on the ‘Support Our Campaign’ button at www.rospace.com/about/currentcampaigns/lighter-evenings/.

If successful, the Bill will lead to the Government carrying out a cross-departmental analysis of the benefits of Single/Double Summer Time (GMT+1 in winter/GMT+2 in summer) - which in turn could trigger a three-year trial.

Mullarkey said: ‘Now that darkness is about to descend - and with it an almost inevitable spike in road accidents at twilight - we need to rekindle the debate.’

The poll result will be revealed by Mullarkey, via Twitter (@RoSPA #clockchange) on Wednesday, October 26. It will be followed by a live hour-long Q&A Twitter session with Mullarkey from 12.30pm.

New look MoT certificate introduced

A NEW-look MoT certificate for cars and motorbikes is being introduced on Monday (October 17).

Certificates will be printed on to a single side of plain A4 paper in black ink instead of the old green and white form.

Although the certificate will look different it is still confirmation that an MoT result has been recorded on the official MoT database.

The Vehicle and Operator Services Agency says that the new format will bring benefits for motorists as the advisory notice, which warns owners of those defects that do not warrant a failure and was previously printed on a separate sheet, will now be shown on the same single sheet. That, says the organisation, will help people buying used cars as, when potential buyers ask to see the MoT certificate, there is no risk that the sheet with the 'advisories' on will be missing.

Alastair Peoples, VOSA chief executive, said: 'Making this change to the MoT certificate will help reduce costs for VOSA and for garages at the same time as well as providing information in a more useful format.

'Motorists will benefit by having all the details about their car included on one sheet of paper making it easier to keep track of paperwork and allowing people buying used cars to see all the relevant information about the vehicle.'

Government invests further £15m in low carbon technology

BUSINESS Secretary Vince Cable has announced a further £15 million investment in projects to accelerate the commercialisation of low carbon vehicles.

The cash, which will become available in the New Year, was, said Cable aimed at continuing to ensure that the UK car industry was at the forefront of innovation

Already, he said, that the low carbon vehicles programme was achieving encouraging results.

Axeon, for example, was a company based in Dundee, which, he said, had developed a battery which gave a 35% improvement in range compared to existing technologies, while the Government's investment programme had played a significant role in Nissan's decision to base production of the electric Leaf model and other batteries in Sunderland.

Dealer news

Mazda claims online lead with dealer network web solutions

MAZDA says it is the first car manufacturer in the UK to roll out advanced web marketing tools for use by its entire franchised dealer network.

The strategy will see all Mazda dealers introduce a common website template alongside a range of web-based sales and marketing solutions, covering everything from e-commerce for Mazda parts and accessories, to a used vehicle locator where consumers can perform a search from all Mazda's used vehicle stock in the UK.

The sales-focused web strategy has been developed in partnership with GForces - the UK auto sector's leading web management firm - which will supply the NetDirector Auto solution as the underlying technology platform.

Key to the project has been the tailoring of NetDirector's sophisticated content management system, allowing Mazda to manage its brand identity across all dealer sites and also implement network-wide changes, such as when new models or finance offers are launched.

Dealers can tailor key aspects of content on their own sites, as well as manage search engine performance and administer vehicle stock details.

Each Mazda outlet will be able to access a range of bolt-on web marketing technologies, including GForces' NetDirector Auto eCommerce for the retailing of parts and accessories online, and the NetDirector Lead-Beast lead-tracking tool.

Each dealer site will also incorporate a feature-rich used-vehicle locator where car buyers can choose to search Mazda's national used vehicle stock, as well as the dealer's own used car list.

It will also be possible to view all Mazda dealer sites via mobile devices, allowing customers to research potential car purchases while on the go.

Tim Smith, commercial director of GForces, said: 'This represents a significant step forward in the way that carmakers work with their franchised dealers to market vehicles and interact with customers via the web.'

Dealership gains UK's first electric vehicle accreditation

A CAR dealership and fleet management company has become the first business in the UK to train its workers in a potentially life-saving new electric vehicle (EV) qualification.

Vic Young Group, in South Shields, South Tyneside, is the first automotive company to complete a BTEC Level 2 in EV Hazard Management. The course, delivered by Gateshead College's AutoSkills Centre, teaches mechanics and service engineers how to safely maintain and repair EVs such as the Nissan Leaf.

Stewart Bedlington, service manager for the Vic Young Group, said: 'Ultimately, every car dealer is going to have to know how to deal with electric cars. Low carbon vehicles represent the future of the automotive industry and Vic Young wants to be right at the forefront of it.'

'Through this investment in training, our customers know they can buy an EV from us with the same complete confidence they would have when buying a conventional car or commercial vehicle.'

The family-run Vic Young Group includes the Vic Young Nissan franchise in South Shields and Vic Young Fleet Management, which manages more than 600 cars and commercial vehicles for companies nationwide. The Group recently ordered its first two Nissan Leafs, which are destined for a corporate client.

Bedlington added: 'This training was doubly useful to us. Firstly there are already Nissan Leafs on the roads in North East England and we are in a great position to win that service business. Secondly, the breadth of the training has equipped our fleet management division with the capabilities to support a wide range of hybrids and EVs.'

The three-day EV Hazard Management course covers areas such as vehicle identification, the component make-up of EV and hybrid systems, safe isolation of vehicles and the safe storage and handling of batteries. It also covers aspects of working with faulty or damaged vehicles - and how to deal with the hazards these vehicles may present. The course costs £450 per person.

Andy Barton, assessor and examiner for electric vehicles at Gateshead College, said: 'Modern electric vehicles are high voltage and can kill or seriously injure the unwary. Our training helps companies and organisations prepare for the influx of new technology vehicles we will see over the next few years.'

- ***Plugged in - Vic Young Group mechanic Scott Bedlington is pictured with EV Hazard Management course trainer Andy Barton.***

General motor industry news

Drivers advised to prepare for winter with ‘big freeze’ due

METEOROLOGISTS are forecasting that Britain faces an ‘early big freeze’, which coupled with the nights already ‘drawing in’ and the end of Summer Time during the last week of October means motorists should be preparing for winter driving conditions.

The combination of poor weather and longer winter nights pose a danger on the roads with about 50% of all reported road traffic collisions at night occurring in wet conditions.

Driving between 3pm and 6pm is also a dangerous time when people are travelling home after a busy day at work and children are making their way home from school.

During the summer up to a quarter of all collisions happen during those hours, but when the clocks go back, heavy traffic and rapidly deteriorating light increases that statistic to a third.

Therefore, says Dr Will Murray, research director at Interactive Driving Systems: ‘Now is a good time to focus on staying safe on the road this winter - whether you are driving on work business or in your own time.

‘Driving in winter weather - falling leaves, snow, ice, wet and cold - creates a great challenge for vehicles and drivers. Keeping yourself and your vehicle in good technical repair reduces your overall chances of any mishap or disaster.’

He advises vehicles undergo a pre-winter check: electrical system (battery, ignition and lights); brakes; tyres; exhaust; wipers; fluids, radiator/antifreeze and heating/cooling system and that the fuel tank is kept close to full to ensure it does not run dry.

Tyre checks are also vital - pressure and tread. Recent research has shown that effective well maintained tyres can have a major effect on stopping distances on wet and slippery roads so weekly checks, or when refuelling, are recommended.

In extreme weather conditions, drivers are advised to carry an emergency car kit. This should include things like warm clothing, boots, gloves or mittens, flashlight with fresh batteries, blankets, and fresh first-aid supplies.

Additionally, during bad weather, drivers should ensure family, friends and colleagues know where they are going, route of travel, and when they expect to arrive.

Once on the road, motorists should drive according to current road and weather conditions with caution the key word while also ensuring all windows (front, side and rear) and mirrors are clear and that wipers and defrosters are in good working condition.

Murray concluded: ‘Remember to make sure you and your vehicle are in top condition; plan your journeys and adapt your travel to allow for the road and weather conditions.’

- Further winter driving advice is available at www.thinkroadsafety.gov.uk and www.brake.org.uk.

Economy driving record tumbles in MPG Marathon

HYPER-milers taking part in the 2011 ALD Automotive/Shell FuelSave MPG Marathon have once again demonstrated that the use of smarter driving techniques can save a considerable amount of money at the fuel pumps.

The highly competitive annual economy driving event, now in its 11th year, aims to get motorists thinking about the way they drive, and the impact this has on their vehicle's fuel consumption.

The event challenges the country's leading eco drivers to get the best possible MPG performance from their vehicle and the winner for the third year in succession was the Smart for-two CDI driven by eco-driving champion and former racer, Mick Linford.

Linford and co-driver Ella Flynn needed less than four gallons of diesel to cover the 370-mile course centered on Cirencester, clocking up 99.24 mpg in the process. The performance left Linford agonisingly short of the 100 mpg barrier, which has never been broken in the history of this real-world driving event.

Second place in the competition for Best MPG went to motoring journalists Peter Cracknell and Dave Randle who clocked up 86.4 mpg in a Suzuki Swift 1.3 DDiS, while former BBC *Top Gear* presenter Sue Baker turned in a truly remarkable performance in the family-sized Skoda Octavia Greenline, achieving 85.98 mpg.

Drivers also sought to find who could register the greatest percentage improvement over the motor manufacturers' published fuel consumption in the sternest test of skill and anticipation. Clear winner in a Vauxhall VXR8 were Andrew Duerden and Chris Mooney who with 32.14 mpg crafted their way to a 53% improvement over the car's combined cycle figure of 21 mpg.

Second place in the percentage improvement class with a 48% uplift went to twice former winners David Madgwick and Ashleigh White in a Volkswagen Golf R 4 Motion, with Cracknell and Randle also claiming a rostrum position here with a 28% improvement on their car's 67.3 mpg combined cycle figure.

MPG Marathon organiser Ross Durkin said: 'There were plenty of notable performances with almost every team taking part beating the manufacturer's published figures for their vehicle - something that every car driver should aim for.

'The people who took part are some of the best economy drivers in the world. But the overall aim of the event is to raise awareness among normal motorists that a few simple techniques - such as better anticipation of the road ahead, smooth acceleration and correct use of gears - can bring about significant savings at the fuel pumps,' he added.

There was equally stiff competition in the light commercial vehicle section. No less than 11 vans took part in the event which saw the LCVs competing in gross vehicle weight classes, as well as vying for the overall award for the best percentage improvement over published figures.

Overall winner by the slimmest of margins in the percentage improvement class was the Renault Trafic dCi 115 piloted by driver training experts Martin Carter and Alison Miller. Their 59.11 mpg was good for a 54.73% improvement over Renault's figure of 38.2 mpg and just pipped fleet safety managers Lee Stiff and Ian Marginson into second place with a 53.65% uplift in an identical Renault van.

Fierce rivalry saw John Kerswill pip *Van Fleet World* editor John Kendall in the race for the best outright MPG by a van, with 82.96 mpg and 81.79 mpg respectively in their Fiat Fiorino and Citroen Nemo vans.

There were also class wins for Ford's Transit Van, claiming first place in both 2800kg and 3500kg classes.

[People on the move](#)

Two new centre managers appointed by Manheim

MANHEIM Auctions continues to strengthen its management team with the appointment of new centre managers at Birmingham and at Northampton.

The new manager at Birmingham is Ian Nicholls who succeeds Steve Hanna, the new manager at Northampton.

Nicholls joined Manheim Auctions in 1995 and has worked in a variety of management positions throughout the business both in the UK and in Europe. Hanna has worked for Manheim Auctions for eight years, initially as part of the dealer sales team before being appointed as auction centre manager at Coventry in August 2008 and then moving to Birmingham in April 2010.

Vauxhall strengthens fleet aftersales team

VAUXHALL has appointed Ian Dugdale as its fleet aftersales development manager. He is field-based and will be working alongside Andy Boocock, fleet programmes and systems manager, to develop and promote the Vauxhall Aftersales offering to its fleet customers.

For the last 10 years, Dugdale has worked for a top 50 contract hire company where he was responsible for most areas of the business including managing aftersales, fleet management and customer care.

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