

This Week's Briefing

Finance bosses demand cost parity from electric vehicles

DfT says 'no decisions' made on MoT changes

HMRC published new quarterly Advisory Fuel Rates

Nine new models achieve five-star Euro NCAP safety rating

Infiniti aims for 10% of global luxury car market

Model update: Audi, BMW, Fiat, Peugeot, Mercedes, SEAT

Motorists cut back as high fuel prices take toll

The Editor's View

RECESSION, rising inflation, lower net incomes and a continuing squeeze on household budgets are radically altering the dynamics of the used car market - and will continue to do so for years to come, according to a new report. One of the conclusions of the 34-page report by Professor Peter Cooke, of the University of Buckingham, is that fleet decision-makers should base their car buying strategies around the vehicles that are likely to be desirable to used car buyers. That view also implies that historically fleet operators have ignored the whims of the used car buying public despite the size of the market - 7.84 million sales at its peak in 1995 and 6.3m last year, despite the recession. Cooke's view is that used car buyers want to run small, fuel-efficient cars of which there is presently a significant shortage. With the supply of up to five-year-old company cars weakening further over the next two years due to a cut in new car sales, pro-active fleet operators that adapt swiftly to a changing marketplace may reap whatever residual value premium is available. .

Fleet file

Fleet chiefs advised to choose new cars with used buyers in mind

FLEET operators should buy new cars with private used car buyers in mind and that means smaller, fuel-efficient vehicles, according to a new report from auction giant BCA.

The '*Long View Report*' by Professor Peter Cooke and the automotive group at the University of Buckingham, looks at economic and motoring trends over the last 20 years and suggests what sort of retail landscape used car dealers have to look forward to whilst taking account of the relationship between the state of the country's economy, used vehicle supply and the retail used car market.

While the traditional approach to choosing a used car may be colour, price, brand, and model, the economy is playing an increasingly important role in car choice, says the report.

With the growing economic uncertainty and continuing high fuel costs being endured by motorists in 2011, demand is growing for smaller, more economical used cars, yet used car retailers often find those vehicles the hardest to source profitably, says Cooke.

As a result, the report stresses the importance of new car buyers and dealers viewing used car operations in the context of the wider economy and the pressures many families are under as incomes fail to keep up with the rise in the cost of living.

The old adage of ‘specify a new car with the used car buyer in mind’ has never been more relevant than it is today, says Cooke, particularly as the economy changes. However, he warns, specification change will take three years or more to reach the used car market, which raises a further question for fleet operators - how to predict used car buyers’ preferences and expectations three years hence?

The report says: ‘It is strategically important that the market is supplied with used cars that meet the needs and expectations of motorists, both for the organisations that generate used cars and the dealers who sell them.

‘The challenge for forward-planning used car operators is to identify how such issues might impact on their business.’

Used car retailers, particularly franchised dealers, rely on two main sources for their supply of used cars: disposals from fleet/leasing companies, car manufacturers and various other company car sources and, secondly, trade-ins from the private and small business sectors.

However, used car supply from these channels is currently under pressure from the steep fall and prolonged low level of new car sales due to the recession with demand for new registrations unlikely to gather pace in the foreseeable future.

As a result, the supply of three to five-year-old company cars will begin to weaken considerably in the next couple of years as some 500,000 fewer new units entered the top of the car parc funnel in 2009 and 2010 than was customary during pre-recession times.

‘There is no ‘silver bullet’ to turn up the supply of younger used cars in the short term; which is completely at the mercy of the new car market and the wider economic circumstances that influence it,’ said Cooke, who warns that with a big reduction in the supply of younger used cars in the short to medium term there will be an impact on used car prices and that will lead to changes in dealer practices for sourcing vehicles.

However, with a growing demand for smaller, more fuel-efficient cars Cooke wonders if there could be a ‘counter market’ of buyers looking for bargains in terms of larger, more expensive used cars.

To protect their used car business, Cooks advises dealers to:

- Analyse their target used car market, determine used car inventory requirements to support target market segments and buy stock to meet their specific needs while also building a reputation as a specialist rather than be a generalist.
- Consider marketing suitable quality, older used cars and, for franchised dealers, a wider range of vehicles from other marques.
- Sell a full package of finance, insurance, extended warranty, service packages etc.
- Ensure buyers of used cars are contacted regularly for referrals and repeat car sales - and are fully aware of aftermarket products and services.

The report is available free to download at www.buckingham.ac.uk/cam as well as on the BCA website - <http://www.british-car-auctions.co.uk/>

Finance bosses demand cost parity from electric vehicles

FOUR out of 10 financial directors would not pay a cash premium to introduce hybrid or fully electric vehicles (EVs), according to a survey by the industry’s largest supplier of company vehicles.

Lex Autolease, which leases 300,000 vehicles to firms nationwide, says its poll of 100 financial directors confirmed that cost remained a major barrier to entry for many.

However, for just over a third (35%) of those polled, a price premium of up to 10% - compared to conventional fuels - wouldn't be too much to swallow.

Further findings from the survey, also reveal that half of firms (53%) would invest in hybrids and EVs if they could match petrol and diesel alternatives on a range of criteria, including running costs and convenience of use.

Marcus Puddy, head of consultancy services at Lex Autolease, said: 'For a long time petrol ruled the roost, but today diesel is the most popular fuel choice. So, who knows what tomorrow will bring given our finite oil reserves and rising carbon taxes?

'The fleet industry is renowned for being an early adopter of new technologies and, over the next five years, we anticipate that EVs will become a practical option, in limited numbers, for firms doing a lot of localised 'back to base' short journeys.

'Whether they eventually become a mainstream choice for the company car driver is another matter altogether and this will largely be dictated by how well the current generation of EVs perform on the used car market.'

HMRC published new Advisory Fuel Rates

HM Revenue and Customs has announced new Advisory Fuel Rates which come into effect today (Thursday, September 1).

However, as previously, for the next month employers may use either the previous or new current rates, as they choose.

HMRC announced earlier this year that in the face of volatile fuel prices it would review rates quarterly with the next review due to take effect on December 1.

The new rates are essentially unchanged from the June-August quarter with one exception - a 1p a mile cut for LPG powered cars in the 1401-2000cc band. Below are the new rates with previous rates in brackets.

Engine size	Petrol	LPG
1400cc or less	15p (15p)	11p (11p)
1401-2000cc	18p (18p)	12p (13p)
Over 2000cc	26p (26p)	18p (18p)

Engine size	Diesel
1600cc or less	12p (12p)
1601-2000cc	15p (15p)
Over 2000cc	18p (18p)

LeasePlan reports record half-year profits

GLOBAL fleet and vehicle management company LeasePlan Corporation has reported record interim pre-tax profits of €136 million for the six months ending June 30, up from €90m for the first half of last year.

Turnover for the period under review were marginally up at €3.62 billion (2010: €3.51bn) with the number of vehicles under management increasing moderately to 1,296,842 (+0.26%), marking a change of declining numbers for the past two years.

Chairman and chief executive Vahid Daemi said: 'It is a testament to the strength of our business that with a global economy that continues to present challenges we have again achieved solid profits and witnessed growth in our business.'

'The figures show that the first six months of the year has developed very positively for LeasePlan with the number of vehicles increasing to 1,296,842 from a position of 1,293,516 vehicles at the end of 2010. While this represents a relatively modest increase, more significantly it marks a change of declining numbers witnessed over the past two years where there was a contracting of both operational leasing and fleet management markets.'

'Underneath this modest increase is a growth in our full-service product of almost 10,000 units. This result implies a higher value added product being sold and a continuation of the trend towards outsourcing fleet management as a favoured method of achieving company-provided transportation needs.'

'Building on our solid base of the last few years, the beginning of 2011 has seen the business continue the trend we previously described, namely the return of profitability to pre-crisis levels. With a net profit of €136m LeasePlan has achieved a record result in terms of half year figures.'

Looking ahead to the remainder of 2011, Damei said: 'We are confident about the strength of the performance of our business in the majority of countries in which we operate. However, we take great caution in the recent volatile behaviour in financial markets which are still impacted by the US debt concerns and the ongoing sovereign debt crisis in the European Union.'

'Despite these challenging market circumstances, LeasePlan continues to be in good shape. Our funding diversification strategy including focusing on retail deposits and securitisations has proven to work and has reduced our reliance on senior unsecured funding. In addition, LeasePlan has sufficient working capital and undrawn committed financing facilities to serve its operating activities.'

'Taking all factors into consideration, we expect to achieve positive results in the second half of the year at the same level as in the first half of the year.'

Honda cuts average fleet service booking time to less than 20 minutes

A SUB-20 minute response time for fleets making franchise dealer service bookings has been achieved by Honda.

This target was reached with the help of epyx, the company behind the industry standard 1link Service Network service and maintenance processing e-commerce platform, which is now in use by fleets totalling more than two million vehicles.

epyx set up a specialist service booking desk for Honda at its Meriden, Warwickshire, headquarters at the start of the year with the aim of ensuring that bookings are dealt with efficiently.

Matt Gibson, head of customer and aftersales at Honda UK, said the move had been made as part of a general strategy to ensure that the manufacturer's franchise dealer network captured as much fleet service and maintenance work as possible.

He said: 'Fast response times are an essential part of attracting and keeping fleet business. Customers in this sector want an efficient service and the work we have done to speed up our booking process over the course of this year is already reaping rewards in terms of increased levels of fleet business through the franchise network.'

Ken Trinder, head of business development at epyx, added that a number of major manufacturers were currently working with his company to increase the amount of work that proactively entered their franchise networks through Ilink Service Network.

He said: 'Raising service levels across the franchise network is one way that manufacturers can increase the attractiveness of their dealers to fleet customers. Several manufacturers now have specialist service desks in place here at epyx and we are seeing interest from others.'

Fleets take delivery of low emission company cars in record numbers

FLEETS are taking delivery of environmentally-friendly models in record numbers and employees are travelling fewer miles as part of a continuing corporate focus on vehicle operating costs, it is claimed.

New data from ALD Automotive, which operates a fleet of over 66,000 vehicles, reveals that in the first six months of 2011 average carbon dioxide emissions of new company cars delivered to customers dropped to an all-time low of 138.1 g/km. That compares with an average figure of 142.6 g/km last year and 166.8 g/km in 2003, the year ALD began recording emissions data.

ALD's analysis of the company cars it has delivered this year to customers also reveals that 71.5% have been diesel powered, 28% petrol-engined with 0.5% being hybrids.

Currently, 18% of the company cars on the ALD Automotive fleet are sub-120 g/km vehicles, which means employees qualify for the special 10% rate of benefit-in-kind tax (13% on diesel models), with 81% falling in the 120-160 g/km category and 1% in the 99 g/km and below category.

There has been a significant increase in the popularity of sub-120 g/km vehicles over the last two years. Of the vehicles ALD Automotive delivered in December 2009, 7.8% were sub-120 g/km, whereas in June 2011 the figure was 18%.

However it is imperative that businesses continue to drive down levels of emissions from their company vehicles as from April 2012, the emissions threshold will be reduced, meaning that the new 10% low rate band for company cars will start at 99 g/km as opposed to the current 120 g/km. Company car tax will increase by 1% for each 5 g/km rise in emissions above the 99g/km.

The new charge for 120 g/km emission company cars moves from the current 10% level to 15% in 2012/13.

The key impact for employers is the effect on national insurance (NI) contributions, which is based around the taxable list price and emission of the company car, which contributes to the overall total cost of ownership figure.

The data also reveals that the average emission level of company cars added to the organisation's fleet (138.1 g/km) is over 6 g/km lower than the national average of new car emission figures as produced by the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders. Last year average emissions for all new cars taking to the UK's road fell to 144.2 g/km, a 3.5% fall (8.5 g/km) on 2009.

Meanwhile, with the economic downturn and rising price of fuel ensuring that cost-management is top of the agenda for businesses, ALD Automotive expects to see a continuing trend in the adoption of company vehicles delivering lower emissions.

In addition, improved travel planning, the use of telematics and mileage management by both businesses and company drivers has delivered reduced mileage and a decreased level of emissions.

Finally, despite more hybrid models becoming available and mainstream manufacturers continuing to launch zero emission electric models early in 2011/12, ALD Automotive believes that low emission fuel-sipping petrol and diesel company cars will continue to dominate fleet choice lists for the foreseeable future.

Keith Allen, UK managing director, ALD Automotive, said: 'It's evident from the analysis that UK businesses are really taking notice when it comes to reducing their emissions and fuel consumption. There is such a big correlation now between taxation and emissions, that it is vital that businesses and drivers stay one step ahead of changes in legislation.

'With changes to benefit-in-kind rates coming into affect in 2012 and the lowering of the base threshold of emissions from 120 g/km to 99 g/km, businesses and drivers should continue to keep one eye on their choice of vehicle to ensure that they don't suffer financially.'

Mobile app helps tackle accident reporting delays

NEW research reveals that drivers often delay the reporting of road accidents and essential repairs, which Lex Autolease says could come at a high price.

The UK's largest company car and van provider reports that it takes over nine days, on average, for drivers or fleet managers to report an incident involving their vehicle - a delay which could translate into higher maintenance and repair costs as well as increased vehicle and driver downtime.

'Drivers and fleets are quick to report vehicle fire and theft - usually in less than five days - but that almost doubles when it comes to standard road traffic accidents, which account for over 90% of all incidents,' said Shaun Perks, customer proposition manager at Lex Autolease.

'Part of the problem may be employees' busy work schedules, but in the long run it is counterproductive in terms of managing both time and cost.'

To help tackle the issue, Lex Autolease has developed a new mobile web service - Mobile LAi - which will give drivers the power to remotely book in repairs, new tyres and replacement windscreens, or report accidents using their mobile handset. The service can also be used to schedule an MOT or service as well as providing access to *What Car?* reviews.

Perks added: 'Wherever you are in the world, company drivers can now book their car or van in for a vital repair or maintenance job, through their phone. This empowers drivers to deal with emergencies on the spot, while also relieving some of the duty of care burden on the fleet manager. Mobile LAi is great peace of mind tool for both parties, so there really is no excuse for putting off what can be done in an instant.

'Unlike many apps, Mobile LAi is also available as a mobile website for Blackberrys and other smartphones currently available on the market.'

Lex Autolease says that LAi - its online fleet management platform - is the fastest growing method of interaction with fleet managers and their drivers. Taking the same service to mobile is seen as a natural next step offering customers enhanced speed, convenience and duty of care protection.

'We have over 16,000 regular users of our desktop version of LAi, so we know there is a growing appetite for remote access to our online booking and quotation service. The fact that the app also includes maps, a Kwik-Fit centre locator, useful 'how to' guides and car reviews only adds to the appeal,' said Perks. 'But the real power of technology is added speed and convenience.'

New Ford Focus joins AA Driving School

THE all-new Ford Focus has joined the AA Driving School with more than 1,650 models being absorbed into the organisation's 2,200-strong vehicle fleet by the end of January 2012.

The best seller will join the Ford Fiesta to provide students using the UK's leading driving school with a choice of cars in which to enjoy their first motoring experience.

Ford has supplied the AA Driving School on an exclusive basis since 1998, the year the original Focus was launched, and is mid-way through a three-year deal which will see it supply in excess of 8,000 cars.

Ford helps E.ON clean up with new Fiestas

HOME energy advisors working for E.ON are driving new Ford Fiesta 1.6 litre TDCi ECONetic hatchbacks thanks to a new delivery of 340 cars.

The fuel-efficient, low emission models were chosen for the consultants, who advise customers on products and features to help save money and be more energy efficient.

E.ON operates a fleet of some 4,100 cars and light commercials, 64% of which are Ford vehicles. Ford has been part of the E.ON fleet for more than 20 years.

The 340 new Ford Fiestas replace previous-generation Fiesta models, which the home energy consultants have driven for the past three years. The new cars will be supplied in standard form, sporting E.ON's livery.

Contract hired from Lex Autolease, the vehicles are expected to cover an average of 20,000 miles a year, including personal and business use. E.ON has recently changed its fleet car replacement period from three to four years.

Nina Hughes, fleet development manager, business services, said: 'We have had good feedback from the drivers of our Ford Fiestas, and the lower emissions of the new Fiesta ECONetic models will help us deliver on our lower emissions policy as well as providing reduced fuel consumption.

'As a company we have an overall fleet emissions reduction target of 40% by the year 2020, having achieved reductions exceeding 10% a year, since 2008. We are expecting these Ford cars to further help in achieving our goal.'

The Fiesta Edge ECONetic offers fuel economy of 78.5 mpg on the combined cycle and has emissions of 95 g/km.

ING Car Lease signs up combined fleet of 220 vehicles

ING Car Lease is to provide fleet solutions for a combined pool of around 220 vehicles run by a number of businesses operating in the maintenance, manufacturing and consultancy sectors.

One of the East of England's leading heating, servicing and maintenance companies, Aaron Services, has recently taken on a long term contract hire and maintenance agreement with ING Car Lease for 90 commercial vehicles. Aaron Services currently employs over 200 personnel across East Anglia, Lincolnshire and Northampton.

In the commercial property sector, national property consultancy, Bruton Knowles, has signed an agreement with ING Car Lease for 60 vehicles.

Finally, global manufacturing giant, American Air Filter (AAF), which operates facilities worldwide to develop and test complex clean air solutions, has taken on a fleet of 70 vehicles under a sole supply contract hire and maintenance agreement.

Nissan Leaf fleet helps to drive National Grid's London project

INTERNATIONAL electricity and gas company National Grid has taken delivery of four Nissan Leafs on a four year/40,000 mile lease contract.

They will act as a pool car fleet for National Grid staff who are delivering a project over the next eight years to construct tunnels that will house a new high voltage electric cabling network for the city of London.

The 100% electric Leaf will be used around the clock, seven days a week to transport National Grid inspectors between tunnel shaft sites in and around London. The cars were chosen after trials against a selection of rival hybrid cars.

Paul de Jong, safety and sustainability manager for National Grid said staff opted for the Leaf's five-door practicality, ride and comfort, while exemption from the London Congestion Charge and low running costs were key considerations for the procurement and fleet teams.

'The Leaf is the first electric vehicle to join our 2,600 strong car fleet and has already won favour with the staff that will be using the car around the clock,' explained David Morse, National Grid's fleet operations manager.

Electric charging points are already in place at National Grid sites in Willesden and Hackney to ensure each Leaf is powered and ready for work.

Hitachi Capital has provided the funding for the four vehicles, while Inchcape Fleet Management will manage all other elements of the cars, including servicing and maintenance.

Picture - back row: National Grid inspector Rob Scase; David Morse, National Grid fleet operations manager; Paul de Jong, National Grid safety and sustainability manager; and National Grid inspector Barry O' Connor. Front row: National Grid inspectors Steve Paine and Peter Hodges.

Lex wins housing association contract

LEX Autolease has supplied 16 LCVs and a car to the Grimsby-based Shoreline Housing Partnership under a new contract hire and full maintenance agreement.

The vehicles were supplied within three weeks and Mark Rosten, project manager at Shoreline Housing Partnership, said: 'Vehicle lead times seem to be at an all time record high, but Lex Autolease's all round service and speed of delivery is truly remarkable.'

Gary Hamilton, business development manager at Lex Autolease, said: 'The client gave us one month to organise credit approval, have master agreements signed, promote the account, order the vehicles and then deliver them. Bearing in mind, the average lead time for commercial vehicle factory order is around 10 weeks, we had to pull out all the stops.'

Lex Autolease supplied the vehicles, via the Ford dealer network, under a national contract hire framework agreement facilitated by Procurement for Housing.

Companies urged to help save lives and support Road Safety Week

A NATIONAL charity is appealing to companies to register now for this year's Road Safety Week, which takes place from November 21-27 and to help spread life-saving road safety awareness.

The national event, each year involving thousands of organisations, schools and communities, is coordinated by Brake with support from QBE insurance and courier company FedEx.

The 2011 theme is 'Too Young to Die', highlighting that road crashes are sudden, violent events, often involving young people, but they can be prevented. Data suggests that road crashes are more likely to kill young people than any other cause.

Companies can now register access free advice and resources to help them get involved. Go to www.roadsafetyweek.org.uk and click on 'companies' for ideas and to order a free e-action pack. The pack includes downloadable posters, activity ideas, and a fact sheet on the theme.

Brake says that companies can raise awareness of road safety among staff, customers and the wider community, and gain publicity by linking to the national event.

The charity is particularly urging companies with staff who drive for work to get involved and use Road Safety Week to educate employees on safe and responsible driving.

Brake campaigns director Julie Townsend said: 'Companies can play a crucial role in spreading road safety awareness and helping to prevent needless tragedies on our roads. Road Safety Week is an ideal opportunity for companies to get involved in a national event and raise awareness of vital road safety issues with their staff, customers, business contacts and the wider community. Brake really values the involvement of companies and we're urging them to register online now to get free guidance and resources.'

[Model update](#)

Nine new models achieve top five-star safety rating

NINE new cars have been given top five-star ratings in the latest crash test performance results from the European New Car Assessment Programme.

Models that were given the five-star rating were the Audi A6, BMW X3, Chevrolet Aveo, Chevrolet Orlando, Citroën DS5, Hyundai i40, Vauxhall/Opel Ampera, Volkswagen Golf Cabriolet and Volkswagen Jetta.

The Kia Picanto was given a four-star rating, a result poorer than many of its city-car competitors, said Euro NCAP.

Surprisingly, said the organisation, the new Picanto was not fitted with Electronic Stability Control as standard across the model range. However, Kia Motors (UK) said that whilst a four-star rating was 'anticipated', and was in line with many vehicles in the A-segment, all versions of UK specification Picantos were fitted with Electronic Stability Control as standard.

Electronic Stability Control was standard on Picantos in most European markets but was not standard across all versions in all European markets, said Kia. Euro NCAP rate the lowest specification version on offer within Europe and, as such, tested a version without Electronic Stability Control.

Electronic Stability Control is mandatory on all new models from next year under European Union law.

Michiel van Ratingen, Euro NCAP secretary general, said: 'Proven safety benefits of Electronic Stability Control resulted in new legislation requiring the technology to be fitted as standard on all new models in Europe as of next year. In 2011, consumers should expect this critical safety equipment to be part of any offering regardless of car size or price.'

While many cars continue to impress in the areas of adult and child occupant protection, said Euro NCAP, it warned that pedestrian protection scores were generally still lagging behind.

The Vauxhall/Opel Ampera, Audi A6 and Citroën DS5 only just met Euro NCAP's 2011 pedestrian requirements for a five-star rating but none of the cars in the most recent would meet the more stringent five-star requirement of 60% coming into effect in 2012.

However, said Euro NCAP, a few car makers have already stepped up, showing much higher pedestrian scores such as the recently tested Ford Focus. Euro NCAP said it hoped that others would follow suit soon.

Audi confirms A8 hybrid production

AUDI has given the green light to production of the A8 hybrid with the model slated to go on sale in the UK late next year.

Employing a 2.0 litre four-cylinder TFSI petrol engine for the first time in an Audi model at this level, the manufacturer has twinned it to an electric motor for zero emission driving and in excess of 44 mpg.

Maximum performance from the model is 245 PS and 480 Nm of torque with emission-free running at speeds of up to 62 mph. Emissions output above that speed is 148 g/km.

According to provisional figures generated by early-stage tests, the A8 hybrid will be capable of reaching 62 mph from rest in 7.7 seconds and continuing to a top speed of 146 mph.

Drivers have the choice of three modes - the 'EV' setting gives priority to the electric drive, while the 'D' option efficiently controls both the engine and the electric motor. The 'S' mode and the tiptronic gate place the emphasis on optimal acceleration.

The hybrid saloon has five operating states: with the TFSI engine alone, with electric drive only or in hybrid mode; recuperation and boosting are also possible. Two displays show the driver all operating modes in detail.

In visual terms, the A8 hybrid is distinguishable by details such as its 18-inch or optional 19-inch ten spoke alloy wheels which resemble turbine blades, hybrid badges and an exclusive Arctic Silver paint finish. The metallic paint finish is a standard feature, as are three-zone automatic air conditioning, LED headlights and a Bose sound system.

Peugeot diesel-electric hybrid set for 2012 UK arrival

PEUGEOT will unveil its new diesel-electric hybrid, the 508 RXH, at this month's Frankfurt Motor Show with the model slated for UK sale next spring.

The third model in the 508 range, the 508 RXH is the second of Peugeot's models to receive the diesel-electric hybrid power plant after the 3008HYbrid4.

With a combined output of 200 bhp from its 2.0 HDi FAP diesel engine and electric motor on the rear axle, the 508 RXH offers a choice of four HYbrid4 modes - Automatic, 'Zero Emissions Vehicle', Sport or 4WD - as well as combined cycle fuel economy of 70.6 mpg and emissions of 109 g/km.

In Frankfurt, Peugeot is exhibiting a limited edition 508 RXH. The run of 300, individually numbered examples - 30 will be available in the UK - in Calern Brown with Alcantara leather upholstery can be pre-reserved online from the opening of the show (September 13) at www.peugeot.co.uk.

The hybrid follows the launch of the 508 saloon and SW in spring 2011. However, the new model has a number of unique design features, is higher (50 mm) and wider (40 mm) than its two siblings and is also distinguished by a singular visual identity, characterised by its distinctive LED daytime running lights that give an impression of having three vertical 'lion claws' on each side of its 'floating' grille.

To reinforce its exclusive character, the interior of the 508 RXH benefits from special features with distinctive colours and the use of luxurious materials.

The finish and equipment is claimed to be coherent with the 'top-of-the-range' and technological positioning of the vehicle. Standard features include electric front seats, head up display, 18-inch wheels, panoramic glass roof, dark-tinted acoustic laminated side windows, half leather trim, head up display and latest generation audio and satellite navigation.

Citroën to launch diesel hybrid in UK in early 2012

CITROËN is debuting its HYbrid4 diesel technology in the DS5 - its third DS model after the DS3 and DS4 - with the model making its European debut at this month's Frankfurt International Motor Show.

The model will go on sale in the UK early in 2012 and becomes the first Citroën model to feature HYbrid4 full-hybrid diesel technology, which is also being used by sister company Peugeot.

The HYbrid4 system delivers 200bhp; four wheel drive capability; emission-free electric power for the city; and an acceleration boost function in Sport mode for the open road - with total emissions from 99 g/km. The engine is mated to an automated six-speed gearbox with optimised shifts.

On the technology front DS5 features a range of innovations including intelligent traction control; a new-generation lane departure warning system; an automatic high-beam function that activates and deactivates depending on light conditions and surrounding traffic; a new colour head-up display; and a reverse parking camera.

Volvo and Siemens launch electric mobility partnership

VOLVO has joined forces with Siemens for the joint development of electrical drive technology, power electronics and charging technology as well as the integration of those systems into the manufacturer's C30 electric car.

The extensive strategic cooperation will result in the first C30 electric cars fitted with Siemens electric motors debuting on the test tracks at the end of this year.

And, beginning in late 2012, the Swedish carmaker will deliver a test series of up to 200 vehicles to Siemens, which will then be tested and validated under real-life conditions as part of a Siemens internal test fleet.

Volvo plans to start small scale production of the C30 Electric this year, and next year the company will start selling the V60 Plug-in Hybrid.

Land Rover set to launch new Defender in 2015

LAND Rover has confirmed that it will launch a new Defender model in 2015 with a concept version set to be unveiled at this month's Frankfurt International Motor Show.

The Land Rover DC100 investigates the potential future direction of the Defender, which has achieved iconic status.

Commenting on the DC100 concept car, Gerry McGovern, director of design, Land Rover said: 'Replacing the iconic Defender is one of the biggest challenges in the automotive design world; it is a car that inspires people worldwide. This isn't a production-ready concept but the beginning of a four-year journey to design a relevant Defender for the 21st century.'

John Edwards, global brand director, Land Rover, added: 'Loved the world over for its simple, honest and distinctive design, we are determined that the new Defender will be true to its heritage, while meeting the requirements of a changing global market.'

'We plan to engage with existing and potential customers to help us finalise the details of the new vehicle.'

Honda gives tantalising glimpse of new Civic

HONDA has revealed the first image of the 2012 European Civic, ahead of its world debut at the Frankfurt Motor Show on September 13.

The new Civic features a rear combination light that works as an aerodynamic spoiler, managing air flow over the top and sides of the car.

The ninth generation Civic hatchback will also offer 'stand-out looks combined with class-leading space for passengers and luggage', according to Honda in a brief statement that accompanied the picture.

High-performance Jeep set for 2012 UK launch

THE new high-performance Chrysler Jeep Grand Cherokee SRT8 makes its European debut at the 2011 International Frankfurt Motor Show ahead of going on sale in the UK in the first quarter of 2012.

The SRT8 is powered by an all-new 6.4 litre HEMI® V8 engine, producing 470 bhp and 630 Nm of torque, which makes the new flagship model the most powerful, high-performance Jeep ever produced.

The model features advanced new active damping suspension, which is managed by the new Selec-Track system to optimise road handling, in addition to a new system which allows Fuel Saver Technology to ensure a 13% improvement in motorway fuel efficiency and a 450 mile range.

Meanwhile, the lowered profile, race-inspired interior and exclusive SRT steering wheel with mounted paddle shifters give a performance-orientated feel to the Jeep flagship model.

Designed and built using the SRT (Street Racing Technology) formula that raises performance, the new Grand Cherokee SRT8 accelerates from 0-62 mph in 4.8 seconds and has a top speed of over 155 mph.

Meanwhile, Jeep has announced a series of improvements to all Grand Cherokee models including a more refined on-road ride thanks in part to the vehicle's body structure - torsional stiffness has been improved 146% versus the previous model.

In the UK, the 2012 Jeep Grand Cherokee SRT8 will be available in one specification. On top of the unique SRT8 items, standard equipment will include: Quadra-Trac active on-demand four-wheel drive transfer system, Command-View dual-pane sunroof, Uconnect satellite navigation system, adaptive cruise control, 20-inch forged aluminium wheels, blind-spot monitoring with Rear Cross-path detection and new SRT high-performance vented Brembo brakes. The exterior of the SRT8 is characterised by a lowered (3 cm) profile.

New Fiat Panda in Frankfurt show debut

FIAT will unveil its new Panda at the forthcoming Frankfurt Motor Show in mid-September.

The new arrival, which will go on sale in UK next spring, is an evolution of the long-established city car.

New Panda has 'grown' by a few centimetres to ensure the attainment of the highest safety standards, and improve the level of passenger and luggage space. With an overall length of 365cm, width of 164cm and height of 155cm, new Panda can accommodate up to five people and is claimed to be equipped with one of the largest luggage compartments in its segment.

The third generation Panda features an all-new interior and exterior featuring softer, rounded shapes.

The new engine range enables customers to choose from two TwinAir twin cylinder engines: the International Engine of the Year 2011 85 bhp TwinAir Turbo, or the new 65 bhp naturally aspirated TwinAir, both equipped with Start and Stop as standard. The recently revised four cylinder 69 bhp 1.2 litre Fire engine completes the petrol engine range at launch, but a turbodiesel 75 bhp 1.3 litre MultiJet 2 engine, also with Start and Stop as standard, will also be offered. New Panda also offers a Gearshift Indicator, which helps drivers use the engine more efficiently, and thus reduce fuel consumption.

At launch, the new Panda will be front-wheel drive only, but a four-wheel drive version is planned.

UK Audi dealers soon to receive quartet of S models

AUDI dealers are expected to open order books for a quartet of new S models in the final quarter of 2011 following their unveiling at the Frankfurt International Motor Show this month.

The S6 and S6 Avant, S7 Sportback and S8 share a new 4.0 litre V8 bi-turbo petrol engine featuring cylinder on demand technology, the S6 models and S7 Sportback taking the unit in 420 PS form with 550 Nm of torque and the S8 using a 520 PS version with 650 Nm of torque.

The new twin-turbo V8 TFSI petrol engine replaces the naturally aspirated V10 FSI in latest S6 and S8 and also powers the new S7 Sportback. Start-stop and energy recuperation systems also feature as standard in the new engine.

Fuel consumption is improved by up to 25% compared with the V10 with the S6 returning 29.1 mpg, the S6 Avant 28.8 mpg, the S7 Sportback 29.1 mpg and the S8 27.7 mpg. All models have a top speed of 155 mph.

SEAT reveals new look for executive Exeo

SEAT'S executive class Exeo saloon and ST estate range is getting a new look, and some engineering upgrades.

The revised Exeo 'face' with new bi-xenon headlights and LED daytime running lights (standard on Sport, optional on SE), will make its public debut in the metal at this month's Frankfurt Motor Show.

The styling changes are further boosted by new alloy wheel designs, while upgrades to interior materials include upgraded leather on the steering wheel and revised upholstery.

Meanwhile, improvements to the saloon and estate's 2.0 TDI common rail powerplant now see emissions cut to 129 g/km. Economy is similarly improved, too, with the Exeo saloon now being capable of as much as 57.6 mpg on the combined fuel cycle.

Looking to 2012, the Exeo family is in for further upgrades with the addition for the first time of SEAT's Start/Stop technology on an Ecomotive model, which will help deliver more fuel efficiency.

SEAT is targeting an emissions figure of less than 120 g/km for the Start/Stop-equipped Exeo.

The Exeo range, which is offered with a choice of three turbodiesels or one turbocharged petrol engine, is priced from £19,285.

Mercedes unveils new compact class competitor

MERCEDES-Benz will give a world premiere to its all-new B-Class at this month's Frankfurt Motor Show.

The compact model, which has a lower height and more upright seat position than the current model, is due to go on sale in the UK in March next year.

With a new four-cylinder petrol engine featuring direct injection and turbocharging, a new diesel engine, a new dual clutch transmission, a new manual transmission and new assistance systems, the front-wheel-drive car also rings in a new technological era for compact cars from Mercedes-Benz.

'No model change in the history of Mercedes-Benz has ever seen so many new developments introduced in one fell swoop,' said Dr. Thomas Weber, member of the board of management responsible for group research and head of development, Mercedes-Benz Cars.

Externally the sports tourer features a wide, prominent grille and headlamps extending along the sides at the front while the rear end features a wide rear window, two-piece tail lights and a large tailgate with low loading sill. The roof features a contoured line which lends the vehicle a longer appearance.

The new model crouches almost five centimetres lower on the road than its predecessor and the seat height in relation to the road has also been reduced by 86 mm to facilitate getting in and out of the car easily. However, in response to requests from many customers, the sitting position is more upright.

Four equipment packages (Chrome, Sports, Exclusive and Night package) enable individualisation according to personal tastes.

Mercedes' ECO start/stop function features as standard on all B-Class models.

The new four-cylinder petrol engines mark the launch of a completely new engine series. In the new B-Class they are initially available with a displacement of 1.6 litres, as the B 180 rated at 122 bhp and the B 200 with an output of 156 bhp. Their maximum torque of 200 and 250 Nm respectively is available from an engine speed of 1,250 rpm.

The new four-cylinder diesel engine is a further development of the OM651 deployed in the C- to the S-Class, a common rail direct-injection engine of the third generation. With its displacement scaled down to 1.8 litres, it is the first time that the compression-ignition engine has been mounted transversely in a Mercedes-Benz car. The B 180 CDI generates 109 bhp, while the B 200 CDI has an output of 136 bhp. The maximum torque stands at 250 Nm from 1,400 rpm for the 80 kW variant and 300 Nm from 1,600 rpm for the 100 kW variant.

Another Mercedes-Benz premiere is the new 7G-DCT dual clutch transmission in the B-Class. Also available is a new six-speed manual transmission.

As a world first in the compact segment, the B-Class features a radar-based collision warning system, called Collision Prevention Assist, with adaptive Brake Assist as standard, which lowers the risk of rear-end collisions. The system outputs a visual and acoustic warning to alert a possibly distracted driver to identified obstacles, and prepares Brake Assist for the most precise possible braking response.

Additionally, the manufacturer's long-established Pre-Safe preventive occupant protection system features in the B-Class for the first time.

Two new additions to the BMW X3 range

THE BMW X3 now has two new models in its range - the higher powered, higher specification xDrive30d and X3 xDrive35d.

Benefitting from an eight-speed automatic gearbox as standard, the 3.0 litre engine in the X3 xDrive30d produces 258 bhp and 560 Nm of torque to accelerate from zero to 62 mph in just 6.2 seconds before going on to a top speed of 130 mph. The latest X3 produces emissions of 159 g/km whilst returning a combined cycle fuel consumption of 47.1 mpg.

The new flagship X3 xDrive35d produces 313 bhp and 630 Nm of torque, taking it from zero to 62 mph in just 5.8 seconds. Thank to a suite of EfficientDynamics technologies the car emits 162 g/km whilst returning a combined cycle fuel consumption of 46.3 mpg.

The new models not only come with greater performance and efficiency but also enhanced specifications complete with metallic paint, eight-speed automatic transmission and Dynamic Stability Control (DSC) with extended features. The enhanced DSC includes brake drying, brake fade compensation, brake pre-tensioning and hill-start assistant.

Additionally the X3 xDrive35d SE comes with 18-inch V-spoke light alloy wheels and a Sport leather steering wheel, while the M Sport model adds the Sport automatic transmission and M Leather steering wheel with gearshift paddles.

The X3 xDrive30d is available with prices starting from £37,600 on-the-road for the SE and £39,975 for the M Sport, while the X3 xDrive35d SE costs from £40,205 and from £42,225 for the M Sport.

- THE BMW 5 Series Gran Turismo is now being offered with enhanced standard specification, offering drivers luxury for up to £1,770 less. All 5 Series Gran Turismo models now come equipped with BMW Professional Navigation System, BMW Assist, electrically adjustable front seats with driver memory, voice control, xenon headlights with headlight wash and remote tailgate operation as standard. This month also sees the launch of M Sport models for the 5 Series Gran Turismo. The models incorporate a host of additional equipment as standard, including: 19-inch light alloy M V-spoke wheels, front Sports seats, door sill finishers with M designation, M aerodynamic bodystyling, M Sport multi-function leather steering wheel, M Sport suspension, high-gloss Shadowline exterior trim, dark chrome tailpipes and Anthracite headlining. On-the-road prices start at £46,205 for the 535i SE and extend to £51,800 for the 535d M Sport.
- THE new BMW 6 Series Coupé goes on sale on October 15 with prices for the 640i SE starting from £59,565, the 650i SE from £67,340 and the 640d SE at £62,080 on-the-road. The Coupé comes with an enhanced specification as standard including an eight-speed sport automatic transmission, Dakota leather upholstery, Bluetooth telephone preparation, BMW Professional Multimedia Navigation System with new high-resolution 10.2-inch display and LED front foglights.

[Manufacturer news](#)

Infiniti aims for 10% of global luxury car market

INFINITI, the luxury car division of Nissan, has unveiled a six-year growth plan which it says will see sales rise to take 10% of global luxury market sectors by 2016.

As well as an increase in the number of models, key European markets are in line for a boost in the number of Infiniti Centres, with Germany and the UK getting around 40 each.

Twenty two years since first launching in the United States, and three years after arriving in Europe, Infiniti will be exhibiting at its first Frankfurt International Motor Show later this month.

‘The show is important for us because it gives us the opportunity to spell out how we are going to develop over the next six years,’ said Toru Saito, corporate vice president and leader of the Infiniti Business Unit.

‘We are very committed to growing our business and we will demonstrate this through the launch of many new Infiniti products and Infiniti Centres throughout Europe.’

At the show Infiniti will give a world debut to a high-performance concept car bearing the name of the person who helped develop it and a German premiere to its Etherea Concept, its luxury compact car.

Show visitors will also be able to see the world’s fastest accelerating petrol/electric hybrid, the 162 g/km Infiniti M35h, being shown days after its pan-European launch.

The M35h comes with a price premium marginally above that of an equivalent diesel Infiniti M model, joins the M37 V6 petrol and M30d V6 diesel as part of a three-way choice in Europe.

Jaguar XF, Lexus and Hyundai ‘best of the best’ of the decade

THE Jaguar XF has been announced as *Auto Express* magazine’s Driver Power ‘Car of the Decade’.

Over a period of 10 years readers of *Auto Express* have been invited to participate in the Driver Power survey and evaluate the car they own.

The detailed survey encompassed many aspects of vehicle ownership - from reliability to dealer performance, to design, handling and ease of use.

In that time over 300,000 readers participated with hundreds of individual cars being tested and the Jaguar XF emerged as number one with Lexus named as the Manufacturer of the Decade for its cars’ consistently strong showings and highly rated aftersales cars and Hyundai winning the Most Improved Manufacturer award.

Light commercial vehicles

Fiat Professional launches new Doblò Work Up

FIAT has extended its Doblò Cargo van range with a version never before introduced by a large volume manufacturer.

Called the Doblò Work Up, it’s a dropside vehicle with compact external dimensions designed for use in urban areas. The load box is 2.30 m long and 1.82 m wide, with 4 m² of loading area which can accommodate a payload of up to 1,000 kg. Additionally, the multi-link suspension permits a rear axle load up to 1,450 kg.

The load box is made of high-resistance steel with a floor created from anti-slip multilayer wood and sides in aluminium alloy. Under the floor is a compartment for stowing long tools, safely protected from the elements.

In addition, on each side of the vehicle there is a small step that allows users to get into the load area. This structure has a ladder rack/door poles, load restraining hooks, and a sturdy protective grille on the rear window of the cab.

Fiat says the Doblò Work Up is ideal for agriculture, construction, maintenance or city parks services sectors as well as for the transport of frames and glass and can take, for example, three Euro pallets or 33 boxes of fruit.

The new Doblò Work Up is powered by a choice of two Euro 5 turbodiesel engines: 1.3 MultiJet 90 bhp and 1.6 MultiJet 105 bhp.

The new Doblò Work Up costs £16,065 (basic) for the 1.3 MultiJet 16v Euro 5 and £17,065 (basic) for the 1.6 MultiJet 16v Euro 5.

Residual value update

New Toyota Yaris delivers top residual values

NEW figures from used car experts at CAP Monitor reveal that the new Toyota Yaris will, according to grade, hold between 39 and 42% of its original value after three years/30,000 miles - an improvement of between five and 7% on the previous generation.

The residual value outlook is stronger for models fitted with the new Toyota Touch and Go satellite navigation and connected information and communications package, with the quoted residual value higher by a further two points.

The five-door 1.33 litre VVT-i TR, expected to be the best-selling model, costs £13,260 on-the-road and has a 40% residual value from CAP Monitor - 42% with Touch and Go, the best rating in its class, up to 10% higher than its supermini rivals.

New vendors expand programme at Manheim Auctions

MANHEIM Auctions, Manchester, has expanded its sales programme following the addition of its latest new vendor - Toyota and Lexus Financial Services.

Toyota and Lexus Financial Services' vehicles will be sold at Manchester until the end of 2012 following a successful trial earlier this year. Manheim says that the addition of Toyota and Lexus model will enhance the already strong fleet sales programme every Thursday.

It now also features vehicles from Arval, Ford Credit, Hitachi Capital Vehicle Solutions and Santander Consumer Finance and will complement the established Dealer Direct sale every Tuesday evening.

Politics and regulation

DfT says 'no decisions' made on MoT changes

NO decisions have been made on any changes to the current MoT, the Department for Transport has told the motor industry.

In addition, despite increasing speculation in some parts of the media, the DfT says it has not even announced a formal review of the MoT, which is mandatory annually once a vehicle is three years old.

In a letter to the motor industry in the wake of recent press coverage on the impending MoT review and the possible changes to its frequency, the DfT said it wanted to clarify where the review stood.

In the letter addressed to the Retail Motor Industry, along with other key players in the trade, the DfT stated that although test frequency was under the review it was only a small part of a much broader review.

Any reference in the press stating that the first MoT test would take place when a car is four years old, rather than the current three, was purely speculation on behalf of the journalist, said the letter.

John Ball, RMI MoT chairman, said: 'It is positive news that the DfT have still not come to any conclusions on the frequency of MoT testing. The RMI along with other trade colleagues have been engaged with the DfT for some time on the wider issues around the current test and continue to view the review as a positive

step. There are many areas of the MoT that could be improved and we have been in discussions with the DfT to air our views on what positive changes could be made.

‘However this does not deflect our opposition to any change to the frequency of MoT testing. With more cars failing their MoT test than ever, and tight household incomes stopping drivers servicing their cars regularly, a change to the frequency of testing could have a catastrophic effect on road safety.

‘The RMI intend to continue to work with senior officials at the DfT. The RMI has taken a leading role in the fight against the change to the testing frequency and will continue to challenge any assumptions that a change to frequency would be of benefit to the motorist. It is with the joint interest of road user’s safety and the protection of RMI members businesses and jobs that we do this.’

Dealer news

SsangYong looks for more dealers

SSANGYONG Motor UK, the new importer of Korean SsangYong cars, has launched its drive to increase dealer representation to 65 by the end of the year.

The company is looking for dealers to take on the franchise in a number of open points across England, Scotland and Wales.

Open points include: Inverness, Aberdeen, Borders, Newcastle, Teesside, Leeds, Bradford, Sheffield, Nottingham, Greater Manchester, Liverpool, Coventry, Watford, Leicester, Reading, Exeter, Southampton, London/South East, Mid and North Wales.

The brand is returning to Britain after a two year absence, and the company is focusing its sales and marketing effort on the launch of its first crossover, the Korando, which costs from £16,995.

‘This is a great franchise opportunity for a range of businesses,’ said Paul Williams, chief executive of SsangYong Motor UK. ‘The smaller multi-franchise holder, specialist 4x4 and niche dealer, and even a current used car or service outlet looking to take on their first new car franchise will all see sound business benefits.

‘SsangYong is being relaunched with new products, new investment from the Indian engineering conglomerate, Mahindra & Mahindra, and new backing for the UK importer which is now owned by one of Europe’s leading independent vehicle distribution companies, Bassadone Automotive Group.

‘We are offering dealer-selected objectives, competitive and straightforward dealer margins backed-up by a full range of support including a floorplan facility that is not linked to retail finance, and good parts supply.’

General motor industry news

Motorists cut back as high fuel prices take toll

NEAR-record petrol and diesel prices are forcing more than one in four (28%) AA members to restrict the amount they spend when they refuel the car with the figure rising to more than 40% among less well-off drivers.

At the end of last week, average UK petrol prices had fallen to 134.37p a litre and diesel was down to 138.57p/ltr. In early May, they hit an all-time record of 137.43p and 143.04p respectively. A year ago, the average cost of petrol was 115.62p a litre and 118.18p for diesel.

Among those limiting their fuel spend, 29% have had to drive less or blow their budget. Someone spending £30 a week on petrol is getting 34.6 fewer miles - equivalent to almost two days commuting by car - than a year ago. Last week, the AA attended 15% more out-of-fuel breakdowns than at the same time last year.

14% of drivers pay a set amount on their credit card when they visit a fuel station and 14% set a limit when they pay by cash. Women restrict their fuel spending more than men, respectively 31% against 26%.

Among unskilled workers, long-term unemployed, and people on state pensions only, 44% pay a set amount when they buy fuel for their car. Even in the skilled service and manual worker group, 40% set a limit. This compares with 21% in the top socio-economic group, which includes middle and higher managers and professionals.

Among those AA members that budget a set amount for buying fuel, 23% have had to raise their limit, 13% have had to cut back on their spend and 29% have had to cut back on their car use. A further 19% are still trying to limit their fuel spend but have ended up visiting the petrol station more often.

AA president Edmund King described the research findings as a 'stunning indication of just how badly fuel prices are affecting so many drivers across the UK'. A £30 spend even at peak prices in 2008 (119.7p/ltr) bought 25.1 litres of petrol. A year ago, the same amount bought 25.9 litres (115.62p/ltr) and now it buys 22.3 litres (134.37p/ltr).

King said: 'With an average new car covering 9.6 miles per litre, the £30 spend buys around 34.6 fewer miles than a year ago. In 2010, the average commuting trip was nine miles, which means that a £30 spend on petrol is buying almost two fewer days travel to work than a year ago or in 2008.'

'So often members tell us that driving to work represents the priority use of their car and that other trips have to suffer to make financial ends meet. If the fuel gauge is in the red by the end of the week, the likelihood of a six-mile or more round trip to an out of town store diminishes. Consumers are cutting out one in 20 trips, shopping closer to home, combining trips and watching pump prices like hawks. Some are putting their and others' lives at risk of grinding to a halt by running on fumes.'

Motorists urged to drive safely through roadworks to cut deaths

DRIVERS are being urged to take extra care at roadworks as the Highways Agency highlights its safety message to prevent deaths and injuries among road workers and road users.

Twice as many drivers now recognise that they have a responsibility to drive safely near roadworks compared to four years ago, Highways Agency research shows. More than eight out of 10 drivers say that their driving changes at roadworks, including slowing down and being more careful and attentive.

However, between 2005 and 2010, nine road workers were killed and 10 seriously injured while working on England's motorways and major A roads as a direct result of accidents involving drivers travelling through works.

Over the same period seven drivers and three passengers were reported to have been killed while driving through road works

Roads Minister Mike Penning said: 'Road workers work in a dangerous environment and it's vital drivers show them respect and consideration by driving safely and keeping within the speed limit.'

'Driving through half a mile of roadworks at 50 mph takes just 10 seconds more than at 70 mph. My message to road users is clear: Do not risk lives and wreck families for a few seconds of selfishness.'

People on the move

Peugeot MD leaves for top media role in Paris

JON Goodman, the managing director of Peugeot in the UK since June 2009, is to move to Paris in October to take on the worldwide role of director of media relations for PSA Peugeot Citroën.

The move marks for Goodman (47) a return to mainland Europe where he has held various positions in previous years. He was also director of communications for the PSA Group in the UK from 2005 to 2007.

With 25 years' experience with PSA Peugeot Citroën, Goodman takes up the role as the Group continues its international expansion plans with a new plant scheduled to open in India in 2012 and further growth in Asia, South America and Russia.

In Europe, an array of new models and new technologies from both Peugeot and Citroën in the coming years is predicted to allow the Group to grow market share. Peugeot will be the first car brand in the world to launch a diesel electric hybrid - the 3008HYbrid4 at the end of this year, followed by further hybrid models from both brands in 2012.

Goodman's successor will be announced at a later date.

Mercedes appoints new fleet chief

MERCEDES-Benz UK has appointed Nick Andrews to the newly created head of fleet role, to build upon the growth achieved by the luxury vehicle manufacturer.

Andrews' appointment - he has left SEAT to take the role - comes after a period of change within the Mercedes-Benz sales division and fleet department, which has been focused on a renewed strategy, supported by an expanding model line up.

The focus for Andrews is to build upon the current market share of over 4%; the brand's best performance in its UK history. The new fleet strategy focuses on growth within the three core areas of commercial accounts, small business and, most significantly, contract hire and leasing.

Andrews reports to sales director Mike Whittington. He joins Mercedes-Benz with significant automotive experience, having spent the past seven years at Volkswagen Group, most recently as head of fleet and business sales for SEAT UK, and seven years at Nissan before that, where he became national sales manager for the LCV division.

Ford

Renault looks to build on recent fleet sales success

RENAULT Business - the manufacturer's fleet department - is looking to build on recent success with the launching of two teams.

One team will be led by Patrick Whyman, manager, national corporate sales, who looks after the key accounts, with Mark Hawkins, manager, national fleet sales, overseeing a team managing customers with fleets of less than 200 and Pro+ sales managers at dealerships.

Both report into Darren Payne, Renault UK's director of fleet and commercial vehicle operations.

He said: 'The team and the Pro+ dealer network have done a great job in growing our fleet business consistently in recent months, so I'm sure this revised set-up with greater focus will allow us to get even closer to our customers, as well as delivering a more personal service.'

In the first half of this year Renault has reported a 28% increase in UK fleet orders excluding Motability and major rental sectors via its dealer network compared to same period in 2010.

Wise returns to tyre industry

WELL-known fleet industry personality Mike Wise has been appointed to head up a new B2B division of Delticom, Europe's leading online tyre retailer.

Wise has spent his entire career in the tyre industry and until summer 2010 had been managing director of Kwik-Fit Fleet.

Delticom was founded in 1999 in Hanover, Germany, and trades through 124 online shops in 40 countries. The B2B business will sell tyres through a new website - www.fleettyres24.co.uk.

The business is very much focused on the SME sector with the company promising to offer low continental style tyre pricing.

Chevrolet appoints new marketing chief

CHEVROLET UK has appointed Rebecca Lawman as its new marketing manager with immediate effect.

Lawman (31) has been working for Chevrolet since 2005. She started her career in marketing roles with the Reg Vardy dealer group and a Mercedes-Benz retailer, before joining Chevrolet at the time of the brand's inception in the UK.

Her previous roles within Chevrolet have included a field-based regional role, heading up dealer marketing and her most recent role as product manager.

She will be responsible for all Chevrolet's ongoing marketing activity, including the brand's recently announced 'Make it Happen' media campaign, an initiative that aims to give the American car brand much greater recognition and awareness in the European market.

Nationwide appoints Wilcox as new fleet national account manager

NATIONWIDE Accident Repair Service, the UK's largest accident management and repair service provider, has appointed Sarah Wilcox as its new national account manager.

Wilcox will be working with national and large fleet operators as Nationwide looks to enhance and develop its presence in the fleet market.

Wilcox previously worked at Northgate plc for five years where she was head of sales for non-rental products and, for two years was sales director at Target Vehicle Hire, a rental company owned by Northgate. Prior to that, Wilcox was the general manager for customer services at Camden Corporate, and national sales manager at First Mutual Contracts.

She said: 'Nationwide is recognised as the UK leader for accident repairs but our fleet services offering is less well known - even though we have worked closely with large blue-chip organisations, contract hire and leasing providers and rental companies for many years.'

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