AUTOMOTIVEINDUSTRYDIGEST

This week's news for company executives

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This Week's Briefing

Launches at the world's largest motor show:

- 1.0 litre Ford Focus unveiled
- Lexus reveals new GS hybrid
- Toyota: 10 hybrids by 2015
- Vauxhall's five 'Eco' cars
- Hyundai i30 aimed at fleets

Saab fights for future with reorganisation court appeal

Accounting rule changes drive fleets to pay-on-use maintenance

CBI: Investment in toll roads would kick-start growth

LCV values fall but sharp rises ahead as stock shortages mount

The Editor's View

ALMOST 100 new models were unveiled at the world's biggest car show - the Frankfurt International Motor Show - which opened on Tuesday (September 13). Add in the traditional plethora of concept cars - and even the launch of a new British luxury car company (Eterniti Motors) - and the global car industry would appear vibrant. However, you don't have to scratch below the surface to see that the confidence that naturally accompanies new model launches fails to mask global challenges. Despite valiant efforts Saab would appear to be close to collapse and Nissan did not exhibit at the show - although its luxury wing Infiniti did. Meanwhile, against a continuing bleak global economic outlook who is going to buy all the shiny new metal? Manufacturers point to the emerging markets, but can they swallow up enough cars to keep production lines rolling as European and North American markets contract? Behind the Frankfurt glitz hard-headed decisions still need to be taken as the global motor industry tries to drive along recovery road after the 2008/9 banking-fuelled crisis.

Fleet file

Employers could do more to reduce work-related road deaths

EMPLOYERS must do more to reduce the 'worrying' number of work-related road traffic accidents (RTAs), according to the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH).

It made the call after research it commissioned with TRL (Transport Research Laboratory) revealed that many companies were spending money on road safety strategies, with little confirmation on whether they actually produced results.

In a bid to improve at-work driving safety, IOSH is calling for all work-related RTAs to be included in RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases, and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995) statistics.

Currently, one in three company drivers has an accident each year, and it's estimated that as many as a third of UK RTAs are work-related.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), road incidents overall are expected to rise from the ninth highest cause of death (2004) to the fifth by 2030. IOSH and TRL believe this should prompt significant change in the way work-related road accidents are tackled by businesses and the Government.

TRL principal road safety researcher Shaun Helman said: ‘Disappointingly, our review has shown that we actually have very little evidence to suggest which of the strategies companies are using to reduce work-related RTAs are actually working, and by how much.

‘Although there are some promising approaches, companies may be spending a lot of money stabbing in the dark, using a range of interventions that are as-yet unproven.

‘We think that some companies are achieving results, but we want to encourage businesses across the UK to take a long, hard evaluative look at whether what they’re doing is simply ticking boxes, or actually yielding results. We need well controlled evaluation to show us what works, by how much, and why.’

Helman’s review of the evidence showed that some of the methods that showed promise included fitting in-vehicle data recorders, incentives for safer driving, group discussions around safer driving, and training giving drivers an insight into their limitations - rather than training on vehicle control skills.

And he is encouraging UK businesses and fleets to do more research into the methods that show signs of success.

IOSH food and drink group chairman Neil Catton said: ‘The statistics of work-related RTAs show us that currently, we haven’t hit on the golden formula that leaves company drivers better equipped to deal with driving risks.

‘That is why we are calling for all work-related RTAs to be included in RIDDOR statistics. After all, the more information we have about the incidents, the more we will be able to find common causes of accidents, which will help to determine the best ways of dealing with work-related RTAs.’

Some of the reasons why work-related RTAs happen are distraction, fatigue and time pressure, for example where employees are required to meet deadlines for meetings and appointments, or have to drive long distances in a day.

‘We do encourage companies to use a combination of solutions to reducing the number of employees involved in RTAs. Fundamentally though, the answer is to drive less, by using public transport, pairing up with another team members, or staying overnight in hotels to break up journeys,’ said Catton.

Helman added: ‘We’ve seen the numbers of vans on our road network increase over the last few years. These aren’t as regulated as HGVs, which means drivers and their employers aren’t always held as strictly to account on driving behaviour. This change in the vehicle fleet may have an impact on future work-related road risk, and is another reason why better evaluation work is needed.’

Accounting rule changes drive fleets to pay-on-use maintenance

LEASE accounting changes to increase financial transparency coupled with an ever-increasing corporate cost management focus is predicted to increase demand for pay-on-use maintenance.

That’s the view of Fleet Support Group (FSG), Britain’s largest independent fleet management company with 55,000 vehicles on its books, which is also forecasting a rise in demand for vehicles on finance lease and a switch away from contract hire/operating lease arrangements.

A major catalyst for change is the long-planned introduction of standard global accounting rules for the treatment of leased assets by companies. The revised regulations are expected to be introduced from January 1, 2015 and are likely to mean the finance elements of vehicle rentals having to be reported on balance sheets with maintenance and management fees logged in the profit and loss account.

Meanwhile, according to FSG sales director Marcus Bray, customers are increasingly opting for pay-on-use maintenance - as an alternative to contract hire/operating lease inclusive of maintenance - and making significant financial savings.

The increasing reliability of vehicles, extended service intervals on many vehicles, fixed price servicing from most manufacturers and longer manufacturer warranties as well as robust internal fleet and risk management to ensure that company cars and vans are kept in good condition means that cost savings can be made, said Bray.

'There really isn't any justification for paying a risk premium for contract maintenance anymore when there is no longer any risk,' he said.

Calculations by FSG reveal that businesses can save hundreds of pounds per vehicle by opting for pay-on-use maintenance on a typical three-year/60,000-mile or four-year/80,000 mile contract compared against a basket of maintenance charges from leasing companies.

For example, opting for pay-on-use maintenance on an Audi A3 five-door Sportback 1.6 TDI SE could save more than £360 on average on a three-year contract, while the saving rises to more than £420 on average on a BMW 520d SE Touring over the same contract period.

Opt for pay-on-use maintenance on a four-year contract hire agreement and the average savings on a BMW 118d five-door Sporthatch M Sport rise to more than £500, while the average savings on a Ford Focus 2.0 TDCi Titanium five-door amount to almost £240.

Bray said: 'There are massive cashflow advantages to opting for pay-on-use maintenance as well as the huge savings to be made by bringing the 'risk' back in house and fleet managing. It should also be remembered that when paying a monthly maintenance charge to leasing companies, fleets will also face additional charges for damaged items such as tyres, or other repairs where they are deemed to be driver influenced. This typically can add another 20% onto the contracted maintenance figure over the replacement term.'

Meanwhile, a survey of contract hire with maintenance quotes over three-year/60,000 miles and four-year/80,000 miles on a basket of vehicles from a number of major leasing companies reveal huge discrepancies in monthly rates.

For example, on a Vauxhall Movano 35 L2 2.3 CDTi H2 125ps average savings of almost were £1,900 were available on a three-year deal, while more than £1,000 could be saved on average on a Volkswagen Golf five-door 1.6 TDI 150ps.

On a four-year contract hire with maintenance agreement shopping around uncovered average savings of almost £1,900 on a Mercedes C-Class 2.2 CDI BlueEfficiency Sport saloon and almost £3,000 on a BMW 520d SE Touring.

'The majority of leasing companies are bank-owned and in the ongoing economic climate they are increasingly risk averse causing upward price pressure. Many companies, we believe, will find themselves financially better off by reconsidering their vehicle funding position and conclude that they should be using their own money to fund vehicles, choose to finance lease or even remain contract hire but opt for pay-on-use maintenance,' said Bray.

'Our marketplace intelligence tells us that while sole supply contract hire with maintenance may be an 'easy option', it is in fact proving very expensive for fleets. Opting for multi-supplier finance lease with pay-on-use maintenance will not only deliver hundreds of pounds worth of savings per vehicle over the contract period but will also improve a company's own cashflow as we can demonstrate.'

LeasePlan forms new 'green' fleet solution partnership with Toyota

A NEW partnership has been formed between LeasePlan Corporation N.V. and Toyota Motor Europe, the European branch of the world's largest hybrid vehicles manufacturer, that will bring corporate fleet clients the latest innovation in plug-in hybrid electric vehicles.

Under the terms of the relationship, Toyota Europe will share with the major leasing and fleet management company its expertise in alternative powertrains including the recent insights gained from a trial with more than 600 pre-production Prius Plug-In Hybrid vehicles in the world, 200 in Europe, over a three-year period.

LeasePlan will bring Toyota its expertise of managing 1.3 million vehicles and one of the largest corporate fleet portfolios worldwide, giving it the opportunity to increase the visibility of its upcoming Prius Plug-In Hybrid prior to its commercialisation in 2012.

By combining the strengths and the visions of the two companies, LeasePlan says it can offer its corporate fleet clients additional solutions that help improve the operational and environmental performance of their fleets.

This, says LeasePlan, perfectly fits with Toyota's ambition of further popularisation of full hybrid technology as it looks to meet the challenge of reducing not only carbon dioxide emissions but also particulate matter and NOx to improve air quality.

'We are excited to enter into this new partnership with Toyota in connection with the new Prius Plug-In Hybrid. For many years we have worked with our clients on improving both operational and environmental fleet performance. It is partnerships such as these that help us continue to meet the needs of our clients and, at the same time, further support our ambitions in this area. The insights we will gain through this relationship will be valuable to our sustainable mobility approach and will further support our global GreenPlan service,' said Vahid Daemi, chairman of the managing board and CEO of LeasePlan Corporation N.V.

Didier Leroy, president of Toyota Motor Europe, said: 'With the commercial launch of the new Toyota Prius Plug-In Hybrid, the partnership with LeasePlan supports our commitment to offer fleet customers a greener, more efficient mobility solution. Toyota has already put almost 3.3 million hybrids on the road, the introduction of the Prius Plug-In Hybrid is a major step in our company's journey towards sustainable mobility by reducing energy consumption, improving air quality and further curbing emissions.
LeasePlan will not only help us to raise its awareness and understanding but also enable us to engage with their customer base. '

The production version of the Prius Plug-in Hybrid, Toyota's first plug-in hybrid electric vehicle to go on sale to the mass market, made its world debut at this week's Frankfurt International Motor Show.

Green Plan is LeasePlan's global 'green' fleet management initiative, reflecting the company's belief that organisations can play a vital role in the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions.

Salary sacrifice keeps company cars in the family

EIGHT out of 10 employees are happy to pass on their company perks to their family - including company cars - according to Lex Autolease.

A poll of 130 UK employees, conducted by the country's largest vehicle leasing company, revealed that a quarter of employees would find the scheme appealing, despite being financed directly from their own salary.

Lex Autolease's 'salary sacrifice' product is available to all large corporate firms with an existing fleet of more than 500 vehicles or an employee base above 1,000 staff. Companies will decide if it is appropriate to extend the scheme to employees' family members.

Under the extended benefit scheme, the employee directly sacrifices a portion of their salary through their payroll, on behalf of their relative. The employee remains directly responsible for the vehicle including any charges, such as early termination.

However, employees can reduce the amount of income tax and National Insurance they pay due to forgoing a larger salary even though they will pay income tax on the company car benefit-in-kind.

Andrew Hogsden, senior manager of Lex Autolease's strategic fleet consultancy, said: 'There is a tremendous amount of unexpressed demand for salary sacrifice from employees and even their extended family network.

'This type of solution can create a higher rate of uptake for firms making it even more financially appealing. Moreover, salary sacrifice drivers should generate incremental National Insurance savings for the employer too, which will last the entire lifetime of the lease.'

'Old school' marketing gets better results in fleet sector, says MIB

'OLD school' marketing with simple, introductory letters sent by post is making a comeback in the fleet sector, according to MIB Data Solutions.

The company, which supplies a wide range of data about UK fleets to motor manufacturers, leasing companies and many others in the fleet sector, says that some marketing departments are going back to letters to generate a better response.

Managing director Nick Boddington said: 'It is a simple picture. Over the last few years, companies marketing to fleets have switched in large numbers to e-mail. They do this because e-mail is cheap and fast, which are advantages that should not be underestimated. However, e-mail is also easy to ignore and delete without reading.

'The advantage of sending a well-written, individualised letter by post is that the named person tends to open that letter and take a look. They may put it in the bin but it is not as easy to discard as an e-mail. Of course, postal mail shots are much more expensive and time consuming but you do get better results.

'During 2011, we have seen more and more companies ask us for postal databases as well as the e-mail ones that have become the norm in recent years.'

Boddington added that some companies were also starting to invest more time and resources in producing creative marketing material to be sent by post.

He said: 'Some companies, if they're going to the trouble of undertaking a postal e-mail, also reason that they should not just send a letter but produce a specially designed mailer that creates a definite impact. Certainly, we are seeing more of this kind of material than at any time since before the recession.'

IAM serves up fleet risk management package with Ace

IAM Drive & Survive has launched a new partnership with Ace to provide a bespoke fleet risk management package designed to reduce costs, improve risk assessment and promote overall road safety.

Companies that place their fleet insurance with Ace will now be offered assessment, consultation, and training from IAM Drive & Survive as an integral part of their coverage.

At Ace's expense, IAM Drive & Survive will first undertake a face-to-face 'health check' that will enable companies to properly gauge the current risk of their fleet operations. Ace and IAM Drive & Survive will then assist in the development of a bespoke risk management proposition that ensures regulatory compliance, industry best practice and essential protection for staff.

IAM Drive & Survive head of training operations Simon Elstow said: 'With around a third of all road accidents in the UK being work related, no company with a fleet of vehicles can afford to ignore the positive impact a sound risk management strategy can make.

'By partnering with Ace, we can now provide companies with the opportunity to improve the safety of their employees whilst reducing the costs arising from accidents.'

Ace casualty risk control manager Phil Myers said: 'Even with conventional insurance in place, every accident results in additional avoidable costs incurred by the business such as non-delivery of goods and loss of goodwill, not to mention the costs of accident investigation.'

Halfords Autocentres sign up to 1link Service Network for LCVs

HALFORDS Autocentres has signed up to the 1link Service Network as a supplier of service and maintenance for light commercial vehicles up to 3.5 tonnes.

The company, which has 244 centres across the UK, is a long time user of the e-commerce platform for company car servicing but this is the first time is has opened its doors to vans and light trucks.

Bill Duffy, chief executive at Halfords Autocentres, said: 'We are very keen to attract more business from LCV fleets and signing up to 1link as a supplier of service and maintenance for this sector is a key step forward in this strategy. We are growing quickly and want to make it easy as possible for customers to do business with us.

'We already make extensive use of the 1link platform as part of our relationship with major company car and van fleets and it has proven very successful for us in terms of processing fleet work quickly and accurately. The same should be true for commercial vehicles.'

Ken Trinder, head of business development at epyx, the company behind 1link, said: 'We recently passed the 16,000 mark for the number of franchise dealers, independent garages and fast fits signed up to 1link Service Network, and often those already using the platform - like Halfords - are extending the range of services they offer.'

Launched in 2003, 1link Service Network is used by fleets running more than two million vehicles to buy service and maintenance from 16,000 franchise dealers, independent garages and fast-fits. It provides an online mechanism for authorising and processing SMR transactions that improves control, accuracy and service levels while reducing costs for all parties.

GreenRoad launches new fleet integration platform

FLEET and driver safety organisation GreenRoad's new open integration platform is now available.

Designed to help customers maximise the value of their GreenRoad generated data, this new platform delivers a set of open interfaces to enable the integration of information and capabilities with customers' enterprise safety, productivity and fleet management systems as well as fleet vendor and mobile resource management (MRM) solutions.

The platform includes live data delivery interface - a web services interface that delivers streaming GPS data collected by GreenRoad to customer or partner systems. This enables customers to use the data to power their choice of third party fleet/MRM applications without the need to install additional hardware or pay for additional wireless data costs.

Meanwhile, fleet administration automation interfaces enables the automated management of vehicle, user and organisational information in GreenRoad. This allows customers to automatically synchronise GreenRoad with master data sources such as a fleet management application or an HR application where that information is stored and managed

Finally, behavioural insight interfaces are delivered through common file transfer reports. The data reflects driver safety scores, event, trip insights and event insights that can be integrated with driver risk profile risk management and business intelligence systems.

'Our open integration platform allows customers to leverage their investment in GreenRoad while minimising the time and effort required to integrate GreenRoad data with their internal and vendor-provided systems,' said Aidan Rowsome, general manager, GreenRoad Europe.

National Mobile Windscreens signs new deals with major suppliers

FAST-expanding National Mobile Windscreens has signed major new long-term supply agreements with three of the biggest names in the global automotive glazing industry.

National Mobile Windscreens, a founder of the National Windscreens consortium, which has 114 branches and a fleet of 740 mobile units, has signed contracts with:

- Pilkington Automotive, the global leader in automotive glass replacement, distribution and wholesale
- Dow Automotive Systems, a worldwide supplier of urethane glass bonding adhesives and other services
- Esprit Windscreen Systems, the leading global manufacturer and supplier of windscreen repair tools and equipment.

Phil Lomas, managing director of National Mobile Windscreens, which is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year, said: 'The new long-term partnerships underline our commitment to using high quality products from the world's leading suppliers to the automotive glazing industry.'

The duration of the contracts, which were signed following competitive tenders, has not been disclosed. The three deals have been implemented based on product quality, customer service and price as well as the promise of product supply reliability.

Lomas added: 'Our service delivery is already highly valued by our customers according to market research and the signing of the new contracts will further cement our position as the preferred supplier of choice by major fleets, accident management companies and insurers.'

Last chance to showcase cleaner technologies in Fleet Hero Awards

SUPPLIERS of fuel efficient vehicles, innovative low carbon technologies and fuel-saving services all have the chance to showcase their green fleet initiatives in the Energy Saving Trust Fleet Hero Awards.

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

However, the deadline for initial applications is Tuesday (September 20). Applying initially requires only a 250-word entry outlining why your organisation should win.

Those applicants who qualify to enter the second and final round of judging will be notified by Tuesday, September 27 and invited to submit a second, more detailed application by Friday, October 14.

To receive an application form, please email your name, job title and organisation to fleetheroes@est.org.uk. For further information on the categories and judging process, visit www.est.org.uk/fleetheroawards.

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

Model update

Ford to debut 1.0 litre EcoBoost engine in Focus range

FORD will debut a three-cylinder 1.0 litre petrol engine in the Focus early in 2012 offering the performance of a conventional 1.6 litre engine with emissions of less than 120 g/km.

The manufacturer says that its smallest EcoBoost engine features advanced turbo-charging technology, improved twin variable camshaft design and intelligent ancillaries to deliver performance that belies its size.

Other European Fords to benefit from this new engine will include the C-Max in 2012, followed later by the all-new B-Max.

The new 1.0 litre engine is the latest addition to Ford's global family of EcoBoost engines, which currently range in capacity from 1.6 to 3.5 litres globally.

Downsized EcoBoost engines feature turbocharging, direct injection and other technologies and replace larger engines with no loss of performance and with lower consumption.

Ford will introduce two versions of the 1.0 litre engine in the Focus in early 2012 with 100 PS and 120 PS and five-speed and six-speed manual transmissions respectively.

'By offering the Focus with an advanced small-displacement petrol engine Ford is not only making a major statement on how serious we are about engine downsizing - it also shows the strength of our development and engineering capabilities,' said Graham Hoare, executive director, powertrain, Ford of Europe.

'To produce a 1.0 litre EcoBoost petrol engine with such impressive performance and fuel economy is a clear example of our commitment to be class-leading in fuel economy.'

Ford Auto-Start-Stop, Active Grille Shutter and Ford Smart Regenerative Charging will also be available as part of the Focus and C-Max 1.0 litre EcoBoost package.

High performance Ford Focus revealed alongside ST Wagon

FORD'S first global performance car, the new five-door Focus ST, debuted in production-ready form at this week's Frankfurt International Motor Show alongside an ST Wagon.

Focus ST five-door will launch around the world in 2012. Performance comes from a 2.0 litre Ford EcoBoost engine, providing 250 PS and 360 Nm of torque.

The new four-cylinder engine helps the Focus ST cut carbon dioxide emissions and fuel consumption by more than 20% compared to the previous-generation European Focus 2.5 litre ST. Mated to the 2.0 litre engine is a six-speed manual transmission.

As well as a five-door hatchback, which will be available in three trim options - ST1, ST2 and ST3 - the new Focus ST wagon will be available at about the same time.

Ford claims the estate is unique in the segment bringing all of the practical elements of the Focus wagon and adding ST performance, handling abilities and refinement of the five-door model.

The show also provided a platform for Ford to unveil a concept version of a Fiesta ST, which could be the next performance vehicle in the Ford Performance Vehicles product pipeline.

Powered by a 1.6litre Ford EcoBoost engine, target performance levels for the Fiesta ST Concept are 180 PS of power output and 240 Nm of torque, enough to propel it from 0-62 mph in less than seven seconds. Mated to a six-speed manual transmission emissions are forecasted to be less than 140g/km.

Lexus starts expansion of GS range with new hybrid

THE world debut of the Lexus GS 450h full hybrid at this week's Frankfurt International Motor Show marks the start of further expansion of the GS range in the near future.

The GS has an all-new exterior and interior which reflect development of Lexus's L-finesse design philosophy.

Several technologies are making their first appearance in the new GS: a new, energy saving air conditioning system with S-Flow and 'Nano-e' technologies; a second-generation Remote Touch Interface (RTI) linked to the world's largest on-board multi-information display screen; and a choice of audio systems that offer improved power and clarity.

The GS 450h uniquely uses a V6 Atkinson cycle petrol engine, with a two-motor hybrid system in a front-engine/rear-wheel drive configuration.

Improvements have been made to every aspect of its second-generation Lexus Hybrid Drive system, achieving both significant reductions in fuel consumption and emissions with performance that is on par with comparable V8-powered rivals.

The show also marked the first appearance in Europe of the new Lexus F-Sport version of the CT 200h, designed to extend the model's appeal to an even wider customer base.
The F-Sport is identified by a number of new, bolder exterior and interior design elements and a higher standard equipment specification.

Toyota plans to launch 10 new hybrids by 2015

TOYOTA is planning to launch a total of 10 new hybrid models by 2015 with the blitz being led by the Prius family - Prius Plug-in Hybrid, Prius+ and new Prius.

They were all unveiled at this week's Frankfurt International Motor Show and will be launched by the leader in hybrid technology - since 1997, Toyota has sold more than 3.3 million full hybrid vehicles worldwide which represents more than 80% all global hybrid sales - as an independent study revealed that the company was most widely recognised among consumers as a manufacturer of hybrid and electric vehicles.

In a joint survey by automotive business intelligence company EurotaxGlass's and UK-based marketing and research institute Harris Interactive, 30% of those questioned demonstrated an interest in electric or hybrid vehicles, with Toyota standing out in all markets as the company with the highest brand awareness.

When asked to name an electric or hybrid brand, 15% of survey participants cited Toyota, with only 6% naming the closest rival hybrid manufacturer.

Moreover, Toyota's environmental flagship proved to be the single best-known electric or hybrid model, with 16% of those questioned being aware of Prius, and only 6% naming the closest rival vehicle.

Reinforcing Toyota's belief in the strong potential of the full hybrid technology, the study found that European consumers were far more open to alternative powertrains than their current market share might suggest.

The 10-model list also includes the already on-sale British-built Auris Hybrid with the manufacturer aiming to offer most of its European models with a Hybrid Synergy Drive powertrain derivative as early as possible in the 2020s.

Toyota says that its three-strong Prius model family will significantly expand the Prius customer base and subsequent sales.

The Prius Plug-in Hybrid, Toyota's first plug-in hybrid electric vehicle (PHEV) to go on sale to the mass market, will go on sale in early 2012. With targeted emissions of 49 g/km and fuel consumption of 134.5 mpg, the model has an electric vehicle driving range of 14.3 miles and a full battery recharge takes 1.5 hours.

The Prius+ is the first European MPV to combine seven seats with a full hybrid powertrain. It boasts class-leading combined cycle fuel economy of 65.7 mpg and emissions are 99 g/km. It will go on sale in the first half of 2012.

Finally, the existing Prius has been given a makeover with improvements to interior and exterior design and a new range of advanced multimedia systems.

Vauxhall unveils five new ecoFLEX models

VAUXHALL showcased the cream of its ecoFLEX crop at this week's Frankfurt International Motor Show, with no less than five new or revised new models destined for UK buyers.

With carbon dioxide emissions ranging from 94 g/km to 119 g/km, Vauxhall's ecoFLEX range covers vehicles from the supermini Corsa through to the full-size, seven-seat Zafira Tourer MPV.

There have also been significant improvements to existing ecoFLEX diesel models, like the Meriva, Astra and Insignia, equating to sizeable tax and Vehicle Excise Duty VED reductions for private and fleet drivers.

The Insignia 2.0 CDTi ecoFLEX has seen the biggest improvement over any existing ecoFLEX model, its emissions tumbling by 12.2% to 115 g/km for the 160 PS model with Start/Stop technology.

The most economical Astra ever is the new 99 g/km ecoFLEX model which mixes 76.3 mpg on the combined cycle with 130 PS and 300 Nm of torque. Efficiency savings have been made possible by technologies, such as Start/Stop, a braking energy recuperation system, an active aero-shutter on the radiator grille and a lowered body. The model is available for order now.

Powered by Vauxhall's 130 PS 2.0 CDTi unit, the Zafira Tourer ecoFLEX comes as standard with Start/Stop technology, a new variable-geometry turbocharger, low rolling resistance tyres and an active aero-shutter in the radiator grille. Maximum power is 130 PS from the 2.0 litre common-rail engine, and up to 320 Nm of torque is available.

The show marked the introduction of two 1.7 CDTi engines (with 110 and 130 PS outputs) into the new Astra GTC range. While these will become the most economical models in the current range, next year will see the further introduction of two ecoFLEX models, again using the 1.7 CDTi engine with 110 and 130 PS outputs.

With a comprehensive package of ecoFLEX technologies as standard - including Vauxhall's increasingly prevalent Start/Stop system - the GTC will produce 109 g/km and combined cycle fuel consumption of 68.9 mpg.

New Vauxhall entry-level Zafira will under cut Ford S-Max

VAUXHALL has announced that the entry-level price of its all-new Zafira Tourer will be £21,000, more than £1,200 less than that of its key rival, the Ford S-Max.

The Zafira Tourer ES 1.8 (140 PS) will come equipped with a comprehensive range of kit as standard, such as: air conditioning, DAB, cruise control, MP3/Aux In connections, six airbags, seven-speaker sound system, active headrests, and Flex7 seating.

Sitting above the ES in the range will be Exclusiv, SRi, SE and Elite trims. The Zafira Tourer will be positioned above the current Zafira model in Vauxhall's line-up and, says the manufacturer, will raise the bar for design, luxury, flexibility and innovation in the MPV sector. UK order books for the Zafira Tourer open on November 1.

The Zafira Tourer is based on a new chassis, using key components from the Insignia, with a longer wheelbase (complementing its 190mm increase in overall length) and wider tracks than the current Zafira.

Two new engines - a 1.4 Turbo petrol and a 2.0 CDTi diesel (with three outputs, including a 119 g/km ecoFLEX version) - join a 1.8 litre petrol unit to offer a spread of power options from 110 PS to 165 PS.

New British car company reveals first luxury model

DEBUTING at this week's Frankfurt International Motor Show was Eterniti Motors, a new luxury London-based carmaker.

The focal point of its stand was the public debut of a prototype of its first product, the Hemera.

Due to be launched next year, the Hemera is claimed to be the world's first 'super-SUV', providing new levels of luxury, exclusivity and performance in an SUV to create a new niche.

The body of the car shown at Frankfurt closely reflects the final production version, although that will have bespoke Eterniti LED headlamps and lenses. All panels are new and made of carbon composite.

The interior, which will be almost 100% unique to Eterniti, is in the final stages of prototype testing and will be revealed later in the year.

The model is based on Volkswagen Group's latest-generation large SUV platform. At Eterniti it will undergo a complete chassis-up rebuild, including a new, re-packaged interior, and the light-weight carbon-composite re-skin.

It will also have additional engine performance, with the 4.8 litre twin-turbo V8 engine producing over 620 bhp for a top speed in excess of 180 mph.

The company says that the Hemera will feature a 'limousine-like' rear cabin, including twin electrically-reclining rear seats with heating and cooling, twin iPads with wireless keyboards, and a drinks chiller.

Production will start early in 2012, with deliveries by the summer. Prices have yet to be confirmed, but will be around £150,000 for the standard vehicle.

Eterniti is backed by a group of international investors and is an independent, boutique British marque, based in London, where it is establishing a hub with not only a showroom but an atelier and a build facility where bespoke vehicles can be created and hand-built on-site to any specification required.

The facilities will be completed later this year, followed by further Eterniti-owned showrooms from 2012 in key overseas markets.

The company says it aims to help satisfy a growing demand for additional luxury and personalised specifications among wealthy car buyers, particularly in major cities, global wealth centres and emerging markets ranging from London to the Asia-Pacific region.

The Hemera will be the first product in a space which Bentley, Maserati and Aston Martin, with the Lagonda brand, have identified for future product.

The product plan includes a second Hemera derivative for 2012. Plans for another SUV and a high-performance car which could form the basis of a racing programme are currently being developed.

New Hyundai i30 to spearhead fleet growth

HYUNDAI unveiled its all-new i30 at this week's Frankfurt International Motor Show with the model predicted to drive significant fleet growth.

Since going on sale in 2007, the original i30 has played an important role in expanding Hyundai's sales and reputation in Europe's fleet sector. Now Hyundai expects the new-generation i30 to be even more popular with fleet managers and company car drivers than its predecessor.

Targeting sales of over 120,000 units in Europe during a full year for the new-generation i30, Hyundai forecasts approximately 50% of sales to come from the fleet sector.

Hyundai says that compared to the original i30, total cost of ownership for the new-generation model will be reduced, helped by improved fuel efficiency, lower emissions (under 100 g/km) and a lower insurance classification.

The new i30 comes with a choice of four engines with a total of six power options and emissions below 100 g/km thanks to an upgraded, 1.6 litre diesel unit.

The new-generation i30 will go on sale in Europe early in 2012 as a five-door hatchback with the petrol engine line-up embracing a 1.4 litre 100 PS powerplant and 1.6 litre options with 120 PS and 135 PS outputs. The diesel range includes a 1.4 litre 90 PS option and two 1.6 litre units with 110 PS or 128 PS outputs. Buyers will be offered a choice between manual and automatic six-speed transmissions.

The new-generation i30 is larger than the previous model. The overall length (4,300 mm) and width (1,780 mm) have been increased, while the height has been reduced (1,470 mm). Cargo capacity in the new-generation i30 is 378 litres with the rear seats upright - an increase of 10% compared to the original model.

Chevrolet considers re-entering UK upper medium market

CHEVROLET is considering re-entering the UK family saloon market with the Malibu, which made its European debut at the Frankfurt International Motor Show.

The company's last effort at this market sector, the Epica, never so much as made a ripple in the UK. But the Malibu - with sharper styling, far higher quality and a 2.2 litre diesel option built in Korea and co-developed with the Italian company, VM - could fare much better, company insiders believe.

Chevrolet will probably bring a couple of cars over to the UK to test reaction and then make a decision. If the feedback is positive the Malibu could be in the UK by this time next year.

'We won't be looking to stack them high and sell them cheap,' Chevrolet UK sources told *Headline News*. 'We'd be looking to pitch it at cars slightly larger than a Ford Mondeo, but for slightly less money.'

The introduction of the Malibu would mean Chevrolet would have small, medium and large cars in Britain. But first it has to launch the Volt, a saloon version of the range-extender electric car that Vauxhall will sell as the Ampera hatchback.

The Volt is powered by an electric motor, but it has a 1.4 litre petrol engine which acts as a generator to overcome the range limitations of battery-only electric cars.

Right-hand-drive production will begin in November, with sales beginning in the UK on March 1.

Initially, UK sales are likely to be measured in hundreds rather than thousands because of supply restrictions. Chevrolet says it has finalised marketing plans in the UK, but is keeping them secret until the dealer network has been told next month.

All-new Mazda CX-5 gets world premiere at Frankfurt

THE Mazda CX-5 compact crossover SUV made its world debut at this week's Frankfurt International Motor Show and is the first model to feature the manufacturer's SKYACTIV Technology.

Targeting carbon dioxide emissions from under 120 g/km, the CX-5 will go on sale in the UK next year.

It features all-new petrol and diesel engines, all-new manual and automatic transmissions, plus an all-new bodyshell, new suspension and a choice of two- or four-wheel drive.

The CX-5 engine line-up will include Mazda's SKYACTIV-G 2.0 direct-injection petrol engine (165 PS/210 Nm) and its SKYACTIV-D 2.2 diesel engine with a two-stage turbocharger available with two outputs 150 PS/380 Nm and 175 PS/420 Nm.

Targeted fuel consumption and emissions for the CX-5 models with front-wheel drive and manual transmission are 47.1 mpg/139 g/km (petrol) and 62.8 mpg/119 g/km for the 150 PS diesel. The diesel engines meet Euro6 emissions standards without the need for an expensive NOx after-treatment system.

Measuring 4,540mm long, 1,840mm wide and 1,670mm high with a 2,700mm wheelbase, CX-5 has class-leading 997mm of rear legroom and a 500-litre boot with the rear seats upright. Karakuri functionality features the world's first 40/20/40 split independent rear seats.

Making its European premiere alongside the CX-5 was the new upgraded version of Mazda's best-selling model, the Mazda3, promising more dynamism and lower emissions.

The Mazda3 upgrade has more muscular visual appeal with a new front bumper designed for improved aerodynamic performance, a revised rear bumper and new twist-spoke alloy wheel designs. Inside, premium materials, new seat trims and the consistent use of white graphics in the Multi-Information Display (MID) and the sporty twin-meter dials are featured.

Honda cleans up as Insight's emissions dip

HONDA has unveiled a lower emission five-door hatchback Insight hybrid for 2012.

Carbon dioxide emission levels of 96 g/km have been achieved through enhanced aerodynamics and power-train efficiency. Meanwhile, reduced engine friction, changes to the CVT transmission and improved air conditioning all contribute to lower fuel consumption.

The changes mean that the 2012 Insight once again qualifies for exemption from the London congestion charge, and falls into the lowest Vehicle Excise Duty band, meaning owners will pay no annual road tax.

For 2012, the Insight also receives a refresh of the exterior design, including a new front grille. At the back, visibility is increased through the introduction of a slimmer spoiler and a modified tailgate garnish, and a reduction in the size of the wiper motor.

Adjustments have also been made to the engine and suspension for an overall improvement to ride comfort and stability, and interior quality has been enhanced.

New Honda Civic unveiled

HONDA has revealed the new Civic, the ninth generation of the model which will go on sale early next year.

Nearly all of the body components on the new Civic have been redesigned with particular focus on ride and handling, reduced carbon dioxide emissions, design and interior quality, while retaining the class-leading cabin, boot space and practicality.

Designed and developed specifically for the European market, the new Civic will be offered as a five-door hatchback.

The designers of the new Civic wanted to keep the sporty and advanced elements of the car's character but tailor them to express the new model's more dynamic feel.

'We have lowered the height by 20mm and increased the width by 10mm compared with the current car,' said Mitsuru Kariya, Civic development leader.

New Kia Rio three-door and refreshed Soul revealed

KIA will launch a three-door version of the Rio for the first time early in 2012 following its reveal at this week's Frankfurt International Motor Show alongside a facelifted Soul, which will go on UK sale next month.

Designed primarily for the European market, the new Rio three-door - the five-door variant goes on sale next month - is expected to account for approximately 20-25% of total Rio sales.

Rio three-door has the same key dimensions as the five-door model (length 4,045 mm, width 1,720 mm, height 1,455 mm and wheelbase 2,570 mm) and retains the same roofline.

In most European markets, Rio three-door will be available with the same range of powertrains, equipment and options as the five-door - four three- and four-cylinder engines with a 75 to 109 PS power range.

The fastest Rio three-door will accelerate to 62 mph in 11.5 seconds and be able to reach a top speed of 114 mph. Fuel consumption will be as low as 88.2 mpg for the newly-introduced EcoDynamics diesel model, which will also deliver an industry-leading emissions rating of 85 g/km - the lowest emissions of any non electric vehicle, including hybrid vehicles.

Completely refreshed, the latest Soul features a more refined appearance, new powertrains, a higher specification and a more premium feel to the cabin.

Technical updates for refreshed Soul, include the introduction of a new 140 PS 1.6 litre GDI petrol engine and the continued availability of the 128 PS 1.6 litre U2 CRDi diesel engine. The petrol engine delivers 166 Nm of torque at 4,850 rpm, the diesel generates 260 Nm at 1,900 rpm.

In most European markets, both engines will be offered with a choice of new six-speed manual or automatic transmissions - bringing the latest Soul's specification in line with the rest of Kia's product range.

World's first diesel-electric car goes on sale

THE new Peugeot 3008 HYbrid4, the world's first full diesel hybrid is now available to pre-order with full prices and specifications announced.

Having sold out of the initial 3008 HYbrid4 limited edition, the range offers two versions: a 99g/km model costing £26,995 and a 104g/km derivative costing £28,495.

The 200 bhp model combines diesel and electric power for the first time in a hybrid - all other hybrids offer a petrol and electric combination.

The model comes with four driving modes Auto, ZEV (Zero Emission Vehicle), Sport and 4WD and offers combined cycle fuel economy of 74 mpg.

Peugeot also points to the 'clear reductions in ownership costs' through improved fuel economy, reduced Vehicle Excise Duty and benefit-in-kind taxation, strong residual values and exemption from the London congestion charge.

New Swift Sport makes world debut

THE new Suzuki Swift Sport made its debut at this week's Frankfurt International Motor Show and will go on sale in the UK early next year.

The Swift Sport is the performance flagship of the Swift model range and offers higher levels of tuning, steering and braking performance than the standard Swift on which it's based. The new standard Swift has been on UK sale for almost a year.

The new Swift Sport's M16A engine is based on that of the previous model. Thanks to the addition of a variable intake system, optimisation of the intake VVT and increased valve lift, maximum output is up from 92kW in the previous Swift Sport to 100kW with the new model. Maximum torque is up from 148 Nm to 160 Nm, emissions are down around 11% from 165 g/km to 147 g/km and MPG improves to 44.1 from 39.8.

On-the-road prices will be announced closer to the model's launch date.

Maserati considers launching luxury SUV

A NEW sport luxury SUV has been unveiled by Maserati as the marque considers whether or not to enter the segment.

The concept was revealed at this week's Frankfurt International Motor Show and represented, said the company, 'a natural direction for Maserati to enlarge its product range and strengthen its presence in the sport luxury market'.

In a statement the manufacturer said: 'For some reason SUVs today never seem to offer the kind of uplifting driving pleasure and luxury atmosphere that are two givens of today's high-end sports and luxury cars. And this is precisely what Maserati set out to do with its new sport luxury SUV concept.'

Called the Kubang, the model could join the raft of sedans, coupes and two- or four-seater convertibles historically produced by Maserati.

Vauxhall Ampera wins Green Car of the Year title

THE Vauxhall Ampera has won *What Car?* magazine's Green Car of the Year 2011 title and was also crowned top alternative-fuel car.

What Car? editor-in-chief Chas Hallett said: 'The Vauxhall Ampera represents a massive step for alternative-fuel cars. It offers all the benefits of owning an electric vehicle with virtually none of the drawbacks. It gives motorists the ability to dramatically reduce their emissions without changing their lifestyle, which is exactly what green cars need to do.'

The Kia Picanto 1.0 1 Air is this year's top green supermini, while the award for best green small family car went to Volkswagen for the Golf Bluemotion.

Ford's Mondeo picked up the green family car prize, and the BMW 3 Series 318d was named best green executive car. Renault's Scénic picked up the award for best green MPV.

SUVs continue to be popular with consumers, and the green SUV award went to Peugeot for the 3008 2.0 HDi Hybrid4, the world's first production diesel hybrid. The British built Mini 1.6D Cooper picked up the fun car award.

In making their decisions, the *What Car?* judging team considered carbon dioxide emissions and other polluting gases including nitrous oxides and particulates as well as whole life costs, driveability and reliability.

The *What Car?* Green Awards were supported by: AGT Investments, EDF Energy and Warranty Direct.

Manufacturer news

Saab fights for future with reorganisation court appeal

SWEDISH Automobile N.V. (SWAN), which owns the financially strapped car maker, has appealed against last week's District Court's decision to reject Saab Automobile's proposal for voluntary reorganisation

The appeal will be heard by the Court of Appeal in Gothenburg. Saab Automobile is of the opinion that by rejecting the voluntary reorganisation proposal based on the reasons cited in the rejection statement *(Digest: September 8)*, the District Court went considerably further in its consideration than what the legislator intended.

In the meantime, SWAN and Saab Automobile are continuing discussions with several parties about obtaining additional funding for the short term.

SWAN says that international banks have shown interest in taking over Saab Automobile's existing loans in order to add further liquidity to the company.

However, a week after the decision to ask for voluntary reorganisation and the court's refusal and Saab's plight remains perilous.

Saab Automobile AB and its subsidiaries Saab Automobile Powertrain AB and Saab Automobile Tools AB (collectively Saab Automobile) had made the application claiming that it represented the best way to 'secure its short-term stability'. Parent company Swedish Automobile N.V. (SWAN) said it was 'disappointed' with the ruling.

The *Financial Times* said (Friday, September 9) that the fate of the ailing carmaker rested with labour unions and suppliers, which must decide whether to push for its insolvency to secure unpaid wages and bills.

Victor Muller, Saab chief executive, appealed for creditors to 'remain calm' while the company appealed against the decision.

But, this week two Swedish unions applied for Saab to be declared bankrupt because the troubled carmaker has been unable to pay wages to its workers. Other unions could follow Unionen and Lederna in calling for Saab to be made bankrupt.

The court said it saw little prospect of Saab emerging successfully from its proposed reorganisation plan and could not therefore accept the application.

Saab has been fighting for survival since its previous owner, General Motors, threatened to shut it down in 2009 after years of heavy losses. GM eventually sold the company to Dutch sports car manufacturer Spyker Cars.

However, Saab has continued to struggle and production has been suspended for several months this year amid cash flow problems resulting in difficulties paying bills.

Rolls-Royce reveals plans to expand Goodwood site

ROLLS-Royce is to expand its manufacturing base at Goodwood in West Sussex as the brand celebrates significant growth in global sales.

The expansion, which was announced at the Frankfurt International Motor Show, will see total investment of approximately £10 million and will complete the final phase of the site's development.

Work will see the assembly hall increased in size by more than 2,500 square metres, and a new extension added to the Surface Finish Centre, expanding it by more than 640 square metres.

Rolls-Royce say that the new development, coupled with a number of additional infrastructure changes will allow significant growth in manufacturing capacity as well as its 'Bespoke' operation, which allows customers to commission motor cars that are completely personalised to meet their lifestyles and creative ideas.

The decision to expand the plant follows record sales across all markets, both at home and internationally as the company continues to increase its dealer network with several new dealerships launched in North America, Asia Pacific and Europe.

Expansion of the site is scheduled to commence later this year and will be completed in late 2012.

BMW Group is world's most sustainable automotive company

THE BMW Group has once again been named the automotive industry's sector leader in the ranking published by the SAM Group for the Dow Jones Sustainability Indexes (DJSI).

The BMW Group has therefore been the world's most sustainable automobile manufacturer for seven consecutive years and is also the only company in the automotive industry to be listed in this family of indexes every year since it was established in 1999.

Ford boss puts profit above market share

PROFITABILITY and not necessarily being number one is the most important issue on the agenda of recently appointed Ford of Britain boss Mark Ovenden.

Speaking to *Headline News* at the Frankfurt International Motor Show, he said being profitable at whatever was the pound-euro exchange rate was right at the top of his list of concerns.

He added: ‘Being number one in the UK is something we’re very proud of - but does the person in the street know that and does it matter?.’

Ovenden, who returned to the UK in July as managing director of Ford of Britain after three years in Russia, said that there had been a 30% decline in the pound-euro exchange rate since he was last in the UK.

His priority is to manage that decline while making sure that both Ford and its dealer network stays profitable.

At the heart of profitability was producing ‘great product’, he said and added: ‘Product is what Ford is all about.’

SEAT chief says UK growth is ‘balanced and sustainable’

SEAT’S growth in the UK - up 7% this year in a market down 5% - is both balanced and sustainable, according to UK boss Peter Wyhinny.

‘We now have solid foundations to built the brand and create demand,’ he added, noting that July’s market share of 2.07% was SEAT’s highest in its history in the UK.

Profit in the dealer network was improving and ‘established dealers are making a good return while the network is keeping its head above water’, he told *Headline News* at the Frankfurt International Motor Show.

Wyhinny, who has been five years at SEAT, said that he was excited when he joined ‘and today I’m even more excited’.

That excitement is fuelled by a range of new products due in the next 18 months. First will be SEAT’s version of the Volkswagen Up which will fill a gap left in the line-up since the demise of the Arosa.

Wyhinny said: ‘We are always going to be at the sporty end of whatever segment we are in. The brand needs to be contemporary and alternative - we don’t set out to be mainstream.’

GM aims to move Vauxhall/Opel upmarket

GENERAL Motors plans to steer its Vauxhall/Opel brand upmarket and seek more synergies between its European brands and its North American Buick brand, according to a report in the *Financial Times* (September 12)

Quoting GM chairman Dan Akerson, the paper reported him as saying: ‘I don’t think we have positioned [Vauxhall/Opel] as well as we could have in the past and that’s what we’re going to attempt to do.’

He said that GM’s performance in Europe was ‘adequate for the amount of investment time and effort that it’s taking. So we have more ambitious plans over the next couple of years’.

Buick is pitched as a ‘premium’ brand in the United States sitting between the mass market and luxury brands such as BMW, Mercedes-Benz and GM’s Cadillac.

At the Frankfurt International Motor Show, European bosses said that Vauxhall and Opel were not being positioned as premium brands, but would be among the best of the volume carmakers.

Alain Visser, vice-president, sales and marketing for the two brands, said: ‘We have no intention of competing with BMW or Audi, we want to take Vauxhall and Opel back to where there were, the best volume cars in Europe.’

He added: ‘We used to be amongst the biggest sellers in many European markets - Opel used to have 70% share in Germany, and that's where we want to be again.

‘There is a lot of work to do to bring customers back to the brands and we now have some great products. Regaining the confidence of the customers is key and we are getting a lot closer to that in the UK with Vauxhall while Opel has ground to make up around Europe.’

GM Europe chief Nick Reilly said: ‘There is no doubt that the Opel and Vauxhall brands have been damaged following recent events, but we are now winning many awards with our products and we can compete with anyone in the volume sector.’

Volkswagen says Porsche merger faces delay

VOLKSWAGEN says its planned merger with Porsche faces delay which means the previously announced plan to bring the sports car manufacturer into the group by the end of 2011 as its 10th brand will fail.

Nevertheless, in a statement, Volkswagen said that all parties remained committed to the goal of creating an integrated automotive group with Porsche and were convinced that it would take place.

Volkswagen said that continuing legal hurdles meant that it was currently impossible to quantify the economic risks of a merger and therefore to perform the valuation of Porsche SE required to determine the share exchange ratio.

The main causes of uncertainty are the ongoing proceedings and actions brought against Porsche SE in Germany and the USA for alleged market manipulation.

Suzuki to end Volkswagen alliance

SUZUKI is seeking an end to its partnership with Volkswagen, after the German carmaker accused Suzuki of breaking the terms of their agreement.

Suzuki’s board is to ask Volkswagen to sell its 19.9% stake in the firm, the company said in a statement. The Japanese car company, in turn, will offload its 1.5% stake in Volkswagen.

Volkswagen argued that a deal between Suzuki and Fiat for diesel engines was a contractual breach. Suzuki has denied that the deal broke the agreement.

The strategic tie-up was formed two years ago following the unwinding of an alliance between Suzuki and General Motors, which ended in 2008 when the latter fought bankruptcy.

Volkswagen hoped the alliance would strengthen its expertise in small cars - Suzuki’s speciality - and expand its presence in India. In return, Suzuki hoped to gain access to Volkswagen technology.

New online service helps freight industry plan for 2012 Olympics

NEW online postcode data released by Transport for London (TfL) at the inaugural 2012 Freight Forum meeting will help firms plan and manage deliveries during the Olympic Games next year.

TfL has released new data online to help freight companies manage the deliveries they make and plan the routes they use during the 2012 Games taking place from July 27 to August 12 with the Paralympic Games following from August 29 to September 9.

Companies can use the data to check whether individual postcodes in the capital will be affected by the Olympic Route Network (ORN), Central London Zone (CLZ) or road events.

By entering the data into their routing software companies are able to highlight the postcodes that contain both the ORN, for example, and one or more of their delivery locations.

That will allow them to produce a list of both clients and locations that will be impacted during Games-time, and will be a timesaving tool when planning deliveries.

The information, which TfL has produced in conjunction with Royal Mail, is now available online at www.tfl.gov.uk/developers.

The postcode data is one of the first parts of a series of detailed information that will be provided to the freight industry to help companies plan for Games-time.

A timetable detailing what additional information will become available, along with timescales for their release, will be published later this month, alongside an improved and updated freight web portal for the industry to use.

50,000 Citroën LCVs now equipped with Trafficmaster

THE 50,000th Citroën LCV has just been fitted with its unique Trafficmaster Smartnav system.

The telematics package, which includes Trackstar stolen vehicle tracking, provides Citroën LCV operators with major financial, safety, security and efficiency benefits.

Scott Michael, Citroën's commercial vehicle operations manager, said: '50,000 Citroën LCVs fitted with Trafficmaster's advanced telematics has resulted in these vehicles being amongst the most economical and secure for UK businesses.

'It is a practical demonstration of Citroën's continuing 'Business Class' commitment to reduce the carbon footprint of its LCV range, while delivering real financial, operational and safety benefits for its business customers.'

The results of using Citroën's unique Trafficmaster Smartnav package is claimed to include:

- The equivalent of 6,500 working days regained in 2010 due to congestion avoidance
- Up to a 12% improvement in fuel economy
- Up to a 10% reduction in vehicle running costs
- Up to a 33% reduction in driver stress levels, with an associated reduction in risk and safety gains
- Greater vehicle security, with a 98% stolen vehicle recovery rate

Michael concluded: 'We estimate that the unique Citroën Trafficmaster package is worth some £2,000 per year, per vehicle in terms of increased productivity and lower running costs.

The Citroën Trafficmaster Smartnav and Trackstar stolen vehicle tracking telematics package is fitted as standard to every Berlingo, Dispatch and Relay panel van. In addition, Nemo van and all other Berlingo, Dispatch and Relay chassis variants can be optionally fitted with this advanced telematics package at the subsidised price of £399 + VAT (including three years' subscription).

Residual value update

LCV values fall but sharp rises ahead as stock shortages mount

AVERAGE LCV values fell £74 last month - the third consecutive monthly fall recorded by BCA with average values dropping to £4,056 from the £4,130 recorded in July - but sharp rises could be around the corner.

Despite this dealer part-exchange and nearly-new values actually increased month-on-month, although fleet and lease values declined marginally by £32 (0.6%).

BCA says that the overriding issue for the used LCV market is the continuing dearth of stock reaching the wholesale arena.

With ongoing strong buyer demand, conversion rates have increased dramatically in recent weeks, with many vendors enjoying 100% conversions in individual sales sections, says the auction giant.

Further evidence of that, says BCA, is provided by the performance against guide prices, which topped 103% on average - a 3% rise across the board, with all three sectors of fleet/lease, dealer part-exchange and nearly-new achieving over 100%. Year-on-year values are behind by more than £150, having been £18 ahead last month.

Duncan Ward BCA's general manager - commercial vehicles, said: 'There were somewhat mixed messages emerging in the used LCV market last month - average values fell, yet conversions rose sharply.

'The reality is that nearly every vehicle we consign currently has buyers clamouring for it - even vehicles with damaged panels or other cosmetic issues. We simply cannot get enough vans to satisfy the needs of the buyers at the moment, and as a result traders are widening their buying parameters and focusing on older, higher mileage vehicles.

'What we experienced in August was a subtle change in the mix of sold vehicles where the product available was often in poorer condition than we have seen in recent months. However, with little else to choose from, even these less cosmetically attractive vehicles were snapped up by trade buyers - but at slightly lower prices which particularly skewed the average value downwards in the fleet sector.

'Meanwhile, in the dealer P/X sector, values rose as buyers who typically purchase fleet stock focussed on these vehicles. Demand for the very few late year, low mileage LCVs was intense and values rose sharply.'

Ward added: 'While the wider economic conditions may not seem conducive to a bullish LCV market, with the fact that supply is so short we are expecting prices for many vans to rise sharply in the weeks ahead.'

Values fell back slightly in the fleet and lease LCV sector to £4,651 (July: £4,683), while year-on-year values were adrift by £106 (2%). Fleet vans averaged 103.75% of CAP in August, nearly a three point increase from July, said BCA.

Manheim creates UK's first end-to-end remarketing centre

MANHEIM Remarketing claims that it will create the UK's first truly end-to-end remarketing centre at Bruntingthorpe following the relocation of Manheim Direct from Coventry to Bruntingthorpe in late December.

The Manheim Direct team will be co-located with the auction centre in purpose-built offices.

The move is the culmination of a process that began six months ago with the opening of the new auction facility at Bruntingthorpe and will result in the most complete range of remarketing services offered from one single location, anywhere in the UK, says Manheim.

The 670-acre site at Bruntingthorpe enables Manheim Remarketing to provide significantly more storage capacity as well as an unparalleled range of complementary services for vehicle commissioning, reconditioning and mechanical engineering spanning the full spectrum of cars, vans and trucks.

Many existing Bruntingthorpe customers of both Manheim Remarketing and C. Walton Ltd, Manheim's partner and the owner of Bruntingthorpe, already use Manheim Direct so the transition for vendor customers will be straightforward, says the company.

Manheim Remarketing's intention is to transfer staff to the Midlands super-centre facility. With both Manheim Direct and Manheim Auctions vehicles on site, logistics should be more convenient for buyers.

Mike Pilkington, managing director, Manheim Remarketing, said: 'The relocation of Manheim Direct to Bruntingthorpe will create the UK's first end-to-end and multi channel remarketing centre. The growth aspirations we have for the Manheim Direct business will be better served from a facility which offers an unequalled range of services. These are exciting times for our Manheim Direct business which has grown year-on-year despite the more challenging market in 2011 and we will continue developing its range of services.'

Lex Autolease expands Manheim sales programme

THE special 'residency' programme of Lex Autolease exclusive Monday auctions of up to 300 cars every fortnight introduced last month has been expanded and will now take place every Monday morning, starting at 10:30am.

As a result, Bruntingthorpe is now able to offer buyers the highest volume of Lex Autolease stock on a weekly basis.

To support the special sales, Manheim Auctions, Bruntingthorpe is transformed for the day, with Lex Autolease branding throughout including posters, banners and logos around the super-centre as well as Lex Autolease caps and t-shirts for all staff.

Politics and regulation

Investment in toll roads would kick-start growth, says CBI

THE Government must act now to attract vital new investment into the UK's ageing infrastructure - including the funding of new toll roads.

Swift investment across Britain's road and rail networks, digital, waste and energy would ensure the country remains internationally competitive and kick-start UK growth, according to the CBI.

A major new survey of 477 businesses, conducted in partnership with KPMG, shows that 58% rate the UK's infrastructure worse than other European Union countries, when judged on quality, value for money and reliability. And worryingly, just 26% of firms saw the UK as a favourable destination for infrastructure investment.

Last year's World Economic Forum Global Competitiveness Report placed the UK 33rd for quality of infrastructure, alongside Slovenia and behind Tunisia and Cyprus. But competitors France and Germany both made the top 10.

The CBI is calling for swift action to help secure critical business investment and urges the Government to raise its capital investment to pre-recession levels as soon as possible.

John Cridland, CBI director-general, said: 'This survey paints a disturbing picture. Firms across the country say that the infrastructure they depend on every working day is just not good enough and is stifling growth. High quality infrastructure swings boardroom decisions when companies are looking where to invest, and pays dividends in terms of future jobs and growth.

'The UK is still a long way down the international infrastructure league table and languishes behind key competitors. So, if we are serious about boosting exports - especially in emerging markets - and achieving sustainable growth, the Government must put infrastructure investment firmly at the top of its agenda.

'There are large amounts of business capital waiting to be unlocked if the Government achieves a step-change on transport, for example with the introduction of road tolls. Capital investment must return to pre-recession levels at the earliest opportunity.'

The Department for Transport has rules out tolling existing roads. However, a spokesman told *The Times* (Friday, September 9) that it would look at any proposals put forward by scheme sponsors that consider creating new capacity with private capital through tolling.

A new motorway through the Fens, effectively upgrading the busy A14 linking the Midlands to Felixstowe, Britain's biggest port, and an extension of the existing M6 toll road around Birmingham north to Manchester were reported by *The Times* as the CBI's staring points for infrastructure development.

Cridland announced the formation of a new CBI Infrastructure Board of leading CEOs and chairmen, led by Mark Elborne of GE.

Cridland said: 'I have asked the Board to produce a compelling new framework for the speedy delivery of resilient, smarter infrastructure, which will help restore the UK's competitive edge in the years ahead.'

The report, called *Making the right connections: CBI/KPMG infrastructure survey 2011*, assesses the state of the UK's infrastructure and highlights how critical quality infrastructure is to companies' decisions about where to invest and their ability to compete.

Half of companies think the UK's transport network has got worse in the last five years, while less than a fifth (18%) say it has got better. Additionally, most companies rank the quality and reliability of transport (81%) infrastructure as significant or very significant to future investment decisions, while three-quarters (77%) of firms see domestic
transport networks as central to their business.

The report reveals a projected 43% rise in UK road traffic to 2035, while the cost of congestion to the UK economy annually is £8 billion.

First step taken to ensure life-saving eCall in all cars by 2015

THE first measure to ensure that by 2015 cars can dial emergency services for motorists when they have a serious accident has been adopted by the European Commission.

The Commission wants the life-saving eCall system to be fitted to all new models of cars and light vehicles from 2015.

eCall automatically dials Europe's single emergency number (112) in the event of a serious accident and communicates the vehicle's location to the emergency services.

eCall is activated automatically as soon as in-vehicle sensors detect a serious crash. An eCall can also be triggered manually by pushing a button in the car, for example by a witness to a serious accident.

The eCall system is estimated to cost less than €100 per new car to install. Currently, only 0.7 % of all passenger vehicles in the European Union are equipped with automatic emergency call systems, with numbers barely rising.

The Commission decided to take legislative action to introduce eCall because voluntary deployment had been insufficient. The Commission had called for eCall to be rolled out voluntarily across Europe by 2009 but adoption, it says, has been very slow.

A Commission recommendation also now urges member states to ensure that mobile phone network operators upgrade their infrastructure so that eCalls are efficiently passed on to emergency services and without charge.

The Commission says that every minute is crucial to save lives and reduce the severity of injuries when emergency services are called to a road accident. Yet people injured in an accident do not always have the reflex or the physical ability to call emergency services immediately.

eCall devices, says the Commission, address that problem by alerting emergency services immediately even if the driver or passenger is unconscious or otherwise unable to call.

The technology is claimed to speed up the arrival of emergency teams by an estimated 40% in urban areas and 50% in rural areas.

Once widely deployed, eCall will, says the Commission, save several hundred lives in Europe every year, and reduce the severity of injuries and trauma in tens of thousands of cases.

The Commission's aim is for a fully functional eCall service to be in place across the European Union as well as Croatia, Iceland, Norway and Switzerland by 2015.

OFT to investigate high cost of motor insurance

THE Office of Fair Trading is to investigate the high cost of motor insurance premiums, which the AA calculates have increased more than 40% in 12 months.

The OFT's primary focus will be the private insurance market as it calls for evidence to establish the background to recent reports of rising premiums. It will also consider whether further work may be necessary to improve the way the market works.

The OFT says it wants to establish the full facts, the reasons behind any increase, and whether there are any consumer or competition issues that need to be addressed to improve the functioning of the market.

As part of its work the OFT is interested in examining reports that car insurance premiums in Northern Ireland are significantly higher than they are in the rest of the UK, and understanding the reasons for any difference.

The OFT is asking insurers and others for their views on a number of aspects of the private motor insurance market that may raise competition or consumer issues, including: the role of price comparison sites, the provision of credit hire replacement vehicles to drivers who are involved in accidents that are not their fault, insurance companies' use of panels of approved repairers, and ancillary products that are sold by insurance companies in addition to standard motor insurance cover.

The OFT will continue to work with the Ministry of Justice, the Financial Services Authority and other Government departments regarding its work. It will gather evidence from a number of interested parties over the next five weeks, and plans to publish its findings in December. Whether the OFT conducts further work in this area will depend on the evidence received.

The Association of British Insurers, which says the industry has not been profitable for 16 years, said the investigation would give the industry another opportunity to highlight the cost pressures motor insurers are facing, what action was needed to reduce them, and steps the industry was taking to ensure customers got the best deal when buying motor insurance.

The investigation was announced on the day that the Government published its response to the House of Commons' Transport Committee's report on *'The Cost of Motor Insurance'*.

The Government admitted that the cost of motor insurance 'is a problem' with rising premiums making running a car too expensive for many people.

The Government said: 'However, we want to look at approaches which will help reduce the burden on motorists without reducing freedom for business to respond innovatively or for individuals to act responsibly as safe drivers and consumers. We will continue to look at additional measures that will translate into reduced motor insurance costs.'

Commenting on the response, Committee chairman Louise Ellman MP said: 'It's clear that following our report the Government now accepts that it is has to act to help bring down the overall level of motor insurance premiums. We welcome this. However, there remain serious questions about what action ministers will now take - particularly to tackle the problem of referral fees. We will pursue this matter at a further session of oral evidence next month.'

General motor industry news

New car prices fall sparking fears over car making failures

THE downward trend in new car prices has continued with figures from DrivenData revealing that the average price of new cars fell in August by 0.106% or £30 from £28,147.00 to £28,117.00 prompting fears of manufacturer failures.

According to the DrivenData New Car Price Index, which is calculated from the retail prices of every car model currently sold in the UK, it was the fifth time prices have dipped during the past 12 months (-0.073% in November; -0.12% in December; -0.092% in April and -0.23% in July).

However, the Index reveals that the average annual price of a new car since August 2010 has increased by 3.324%, or £904.59 from £27,212.41 to £28,117. But the underlying pace of inflation in car prices has slowed down over the past 12 months to 3.324%. It rose by 4.651% between August 2009 and August 2010.

Commenting on the trend, John Blauth, editor-in-chief of DrivenData, said: '[It] causes revenue difficulties for manufacturers and dealers, most of whom already operate on painfully slim margins, though there are positive consumer benefits.

'As ever, there are some winners and some losers in the short term, but car manufacturers are not geared to continual losses as Saab's present plight clearly shows. If the market doesn't improve in terms of profitability, the possibility of business 'restructuring' (ie. failures) in both manufacturing and retailing loom ever closer.'

Inflation-busting garage labour rates breach £200 an hour

THE escalating cost of motoring continues as mechanics' rates climb to new heights - soaring above £200 at one dealer - according to Warranty Direct's annual labour rates survey.

With the average garage labour rate (franchised dealers and independent workshops combined) rising by 7.5%, well above the current 4.5% inflation rate, an hour of a mechanic's time now costs £80.44, up from £74.82 in 2010.

The survey also revealed franchised dealer workshops to be 57% more expensive on average than their non-franchised counterparts, the widest gap seen for years.

While some car owners will shell out only £35 an hour at the cheapest independent workshops, others pay a staggering £202.21 - the highest labour rate ever seen by Warranty Direct.

The average franchised dealer labour rate is £95.83 (up from £90.59 last year), while independents typically charge £60.68 (£55.90 in 2010).

As well as inflation, part of the franchised dealer price increase could be attributed to discounted fixed-price servicing. This new trend, whereby motorists pay a large up front bill for two, three or four year service bundles, could mean that dealers are funding discounts by charging much more for standard repairs and servicing, and for those who simply break down unexpectedly, says Warranty Direct.

Warranty Direct's survey shows Middlesex to be the most expensive postcode to get cars repaired - charging £98.21 on average. In contrast, those lucky enough to break down in Dumfries and Galloway will usually pay £54.82. The most dramatic year-on-year rises were in Gwent (+26.9%) and East Sussex (+24.3%). Conversely, Manchester benefitted from a near 10% fall in rates on average.

Duncan McClure Fisher of Warranty Direct said: 'Drivers might have hoped there'd be some reprieve from the staggering costs of motoring, but no, they're getting clobbered yet again.

'To think that some workshops are charging in excess of £200 an hour is astounding - that's equivalent to some people's weekly wage. Motoring costs are approaching an unsustainable level.

'There's been a move to push fixed priced service deals, but the knock-on effect is that dealers then charge much more for anybody who isn't locked in and, once the car is on site, it's often impractical to find a better price.'

Drivers urged to check the rubber in tyre safety month

OCTOBER is tyre safety month and drivers are being encouraged to take advantage of free tyre safety checks at garages and tyre dealers

With many drivers experiencing significant problems during last year's extreme winter, this year's tyre safety month aims to ensure that drivers are properly prepared for the poor weather ahead.

As well as educating them about the added safety benefits of winter tyres, TyreSafe, which is promoting the month, will be reminding drivers about the importance of adequate tread depth, correct inflation and general tyre condition.

Fronting this year's campaign are the McIntyres, TyreSafe's family of crash test dummies who will be making their debut appearance.

As well as encouraging drivers to take check their own tread depth by taking the 20p test, the family will appear in a new online animation which gives drivers some handy tyre care hints and tips.

Stuart Jackson, chairman of TyreSafe, the not-for-profit organisation dedicated to raising awareness about the importance of correct tyre maintenance and the dangers of defective and worn tyres, said: 'Tyre safety month is a great opportunity for all garages and tyre dealers to help keep drivers safe on the road. By offering free tyre safety checks or displaying our information leaflets, posters and other materials, they really can make a difference to the safety on our roads.'

Further information is available at www.tyresafe.org

Drivers willing to run MoT risk as budget restraints hit

ONE million motorists risk driving with no MoT because only a third of drivers (34%) book the test well in advance and, as a result, are in danger of being caught out when their MoT expires, according to new research.

In addition to the motorists who forget their MoT expiry date, there are 1.1 million car owners who are choosing not to get their car's MoT renewed on the due date.

With money tight, and motorists looking to stretch their budgets as far as possible, these drivers say that they will either wait until they are required to show their MoT certificate to renew it, or are letting time elapse to maximise the longevity of the new test.

Police data shows that the combination of drivers with memory lapses and those deliberately delaying renewal means that as many as 10% of cars on UK roads may not have a valid MoT.

However, while some drivers may feel the MoT to be an inconvenience, the test is crucial to road safety. A massive 40% of all cars fail their annual MoT, with the average vehicle failing the test doing so on more than three issues. The five most common reasons for failure are: Lighting and signalling defects, suspension defects, defective brakes, illegal tyres and impaired driver's view of the road.

David White, customer services director at Kwik Fit, said: 'If car owners are used to their car regularly passing the MoT with no problems, they may view an MoT simply as a piece of paper they need in order to get their car taxed. However, the statistics show that the test plays a vital role in identifying defects on a car that render it unroadworthy and unsafe to drive.

'It also provides a warning of items which will shortly become unsafe by highlighting them as 'advisory'. This allows owners to rectify defects before they cause a problem, enabling them to drive with confidence in the safety of their car.

'With more police forces across the UK using cameras to automatically scan number plates, and linking to the national vehicle database, those drivers who have forgotten to renew their MoT could be in for a rude awakening.'

With so many drivers forgetting when their MoT is due, there is a demand for a reminder service, says the fast-fit giant. A total of 57% of drivers said that they would sign up for a free email service, compared to only 18% who say they would be unlikely to do so.

RMI director Stuart James responding to the findings said: ‘Motorists see delaying their MoT as a money saving option. However if simple faults remain undetected then the cost of fixing them could spiral.

‘The most important thing to remember is that an MoT ensures that the car is safe to drive at the time of testing. More and more evidence is being produced to show that record levels of cars and vans are failing their MoTs. Car maintenance standards are slipping, and while the annual MoT is an opportunity to check the vehicle is safe it is not a substitute for annual servicing and routine maintenance.’

Admiral awards contract to Auto Windscreens

AUTO Windscreens has been appointed by the Admiral Group as a preferred supplier of automotive glazing six months after the brand was acquired after going into administration.

Managing director Nigel Davies said: ‘This is a major step forward for the business. To secure such a prestigious contract has been a huge boost for Auto Windscreens.’

Lorna Connelly, deputy claims manager for Admiral, added: ‘We are delighted with the appointment of Auto Windscreens, which has demonstrated a solid business platform combined with excellent service levels. I’m sure the partnership will be a success for both companies.’

Trifords Limited acquired the Auto Windscreens brand in February this year and has since transformed the company, claiming to have attracted many clients with its service management system and focus on customer service.

‘Every customer is offered a satisfaction survey at the point of sale via our handheld PDA devices, so the levels of monitoring are unrivalled,’ said Davies. ‘This does set us apart from the rest of the industry.’

IAM urges drivers to order winter tyres now

THE IAM is advising motorists planning to fit winter tyres to order them now to beat the rush.

In countries where severe winters are guaranteed, it is quite normal for drivers to switch to winter tyres and that is becoming more common in the UK because of harsh winters over the last two years.

Winter tyres have a different tread pattern to give better grip on snow and ice and have a snowflake on a mountain as a symbol on the sidewall. The symbol indicates that they use winter grade rubber which stays flexible and maintains grip to well below freezing. The rubber used on standard tyres hardens as the temperature drops.

An alternative to changing tyres is to carry snow chains or snow socks to fit when the snow gets deep. Snow socks are made of a strong fabric which grips snow - they stretch to fit over the tyre.

IAM chief examiner Peter Rodger said: ‘The weather we experience in the UK is nowhere near as severe as many other countries, but with the past two winters having been particularly bad, motorists in the hardest-hit areas may feel reassured to have the extra grip winter tyres afford.

‘But weigh up the expense. A full set will cost £400-£500, and most drivers won’t detect any significant difference in grip until the temperature is freezing. Most importantly, if conditions are really treacherous you should just consider postponing the journey and staying at home. Even if the mercury drops to below zero, safe and sensible driving will mean you shouldn’t have any cause for emergency stops, and so little need to test your tyres to their limits.’

Whyte resigns as ACFO director

ONE of the UK fleet industry's best-known personalities, Stewart Whyte, has tendered his resignation as a director of ACFO, the UK's leading fleet decision-makers' organisation.

Whyte, who is managing director of leading fleet consultancy Fleet Audits and has been involved in ACFO for more than 25 years, will, however, continue to be closely involved with the organisation. His resignation takes effect on September 30.

He said: 'I have decided to resign as a director for a number of reasons. However, the major reasons are to avoid a potential conflict of interest which may develop with one particular aspect of my Fleet Audits work; together with a need to accommodate changing domestic circumstances. Also, I believe, that after 17 years as a director the time is right for space to be made for new blood to be introduced to the board.

'Nevertheless, I remain enormously committed to ACFO. It is a tremendous organisation and one in which I passionately believe. I will continue to give ACFO my full support and ensure that Fleet Audits maintains its active membership.

'Additionally, Fleet Audits will continue to provide a full secretariat service to ACFO and will meet and exceed its contractual obligations as it has always tried to do.'

Whyte first became involved in ACFO, which was founded in 1972, in 1985 when Petersfield-based Fleet Audits joined. That year he became secretary of ACFO's new Southern Region. He continued in that post for 12 years before, after a 12-month break, becoming Southern Region chairman for two years. In 1994 Mr Whyte was first elected to the ACFO board and has continued to serve uninterrupted.

In 1988 Fleet Audits started to provide a secretariat service on a voluntary basis to the expanding ACFO membership and that has continued on a contractual footing for more than 20 years.

ACFO chairman Julie Jenner said: 'I, board colleagues and the entire ACFO membership have hugely valued Stewart's fleet knowledge and experience gained over many years.

'Although he has resigned as a director, I am delighted that Stewart will continue to be closely involved in ACFO both through the membership of Fleet Audits and the delivery of a comprehensive secretariat service to the membership.

'The fact that ACFO has expanded to become an influential organisation in many areas, notably in dealings with a wide cross-section of Government departments, is due in no small measure to Stewart's dedication in promoting the views of fleet decision-makers through ACFO.'

The now five-member ACFO board will decide shortly whether to co-opt a director to replace Whyte and bring it back to full strength.

Robertson takes charge of fleet at SEAT

SEAT has appointed Steve Robertson to the role of head of fleet and business sales following the recent departure of Nick Andrews to take up the newly created head of fleet role at Mercedes-Benz *(Digest: September 1)*.

Robertson moves to the pivotal position in SEAT's burgeoning fleet and business sales operation from within the SEAT UK management team as since 2006 he has held the position of head of marketing.

Aside from his extensive marketing credentials, Robertson (51) has both fleet and dealer experience garnered from a 30-year motor industry career.

Meanwhile, former SEAT UK head of operations Richard Harrison has been confirmed as the new group sales director for SEAT S.A. with responsibility for the five key European markets outside of Spain: Germany, the UK, France, Italy and Portugal.

Harrison (43) spent four years heading up SEAT UK's operations team during which time he oversaw both a significant expansion of the dealer network and a major uplift in SEAT sales.

A separate announcement concerning Harrison's successor and the new SEAT UK head of marketing will be made in the near future.

Leasedrive lands Salmon as UK sales manager

FLEET industry professional and former professional footballer, Chris Salmon has joined the Leasedrive Group, the UK's largest independent privately-owned vehicle management group, as UK sales manager.

Previously with Inchcape Fleet Solutions, he has more than eight years' fleet sector experience in sales administration, customer service, account management and latterly as head of sales. Outside the fleet sector, Salmon's sales experience was in B2B sales with BT Cellnet and, before that, consumer sales with Southern Electric.

After leaving school, Salmon joined Luton Town FC on a youth training scheme but due to medical restrictions could not sign a full-time professional contract. Undeterred, he played for a number of semi-professional clubs before retiring and focusing his efforts on coaching near his home in Portsmouth.

Todd promoted to business development director at VWFS

VOLKSWAGEN Financial Services has appointed Mike Todd as business development director starting on October 1.

Volkswagen Financial Services (UK) Ltd is the captive finance company for the Volkswagen Group in the UK supporting Audi, Volkswagen, SEAT, Škoda, Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles, Porsche, Lamborghini and Bentley.

The appointment and a move on to the board of management follows the departure of David Maloney to become managing director of Volkswagen Financial Services in Australia.

Graham Wheeler, managing director of Volkswagen Financial Services, said: 'The Business Development role is a challenging position within the business ensuring Volkswagen Financial Services remains at the forefront of innovation within our industry.'

Prior to joining Volkswagen Financial Services in 2000 Todd spent 10 years with the Lombard Group, becoming regional manager for the Motor Division in the South West. Since joining Volkswagen Financial Services Todd has undertaken a number of roles, including his most recent appointment as head of sales where he was responsible for the delivery of the business results through the leadership of the sales management team and recently reengineering the sales department so that it can meet the future ambitions for the business.

Picture caption: Mike Todd (left) is welcomed to the board of management by Graham Wheeler.

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