

INSIDE: THE LATEST NEW CAR NEWS

# CarDealer®

Issue 194 | May 2024

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**POWER 2024**

# DRIVE TIME

**ON TEST:** WE GET BEHIND THE WHEELS OF THE RENAULT SCENIC, SUZUKI SWIFT AND TOYOTA C-HR

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- DAN KIRBY INQUEST HELD
- EDEN'S EXCELLENCE AWARDS
- HYUNDAI TO CUT DEALERS
- BENTLEY BOSS LEAVES
- DICKSONS MBO COMPLETED
- ABANDONED SITE'S TREASURES

## PLUS

**THE CHINESE BRANDS AIMING FOR 100 DEALERS AND 10,000 SALES IN UK**



**BIG MIKE: HOW SLIPPERY SID'S SECOND HIP FLASK HELPED HIM BAG AUCTION BARGAINS**

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## THE BOSS

### FOUNDER

James Baggott  
[james@thebaize.com](mailto:james@thebaize.com)  
Twitter: @CarDealerEd



## EDITORIAL

### ASSOCIATE EDITOR

James Batchelor  
[james.batchelor@blackballmedia.co.uk](mailto:james.batchelor@blackballmedia.co.uk)  
Twitter: @JRRBatchelor



### CHIEF SUB-EDITOR

John Bowman  
[john@blackballmedia.co.uk](mailto:john@blackballmedia.co.uk)



### STAFF WRITER

Jack Williams  
[jack.williams@blackballmedia.co.uk](mailto:jack.williams@blackballmedia.co.uk)  
Twitter: @JournoJack25



### MULTIMEDIA MANAGER

Jon Reay  
[jon@blackballmedia.co.uk](mailto:jon@blackballmedia.co.uk)  
Twitter: @JonReay



### HEAD OF DESIGN

Graeme Windell  
[graeme@blackballmedia.co.uk](mailto:graeme@blackballmedia.co.uk)  
Twitter: @graemewindell



### CONTRIBUTORS

Becca Chaplin, Jack Evans,  
Cameron Richards, Nigel Swan

## FINANCE

### FINANCE MANAGER

Kate Gordon  
[kate@blackballmedia.co.uk](mailto:kate@blackballmedia.co.uk)

## ADVERTISING

### SALES MANAGER

Kevin Day  
[kev@blackballmedia.co.uk](mailto:kev@blackballmedia.co.uk)



### ACCOUNT MANAGER

Michelle Searle  
[michelle@blackballmedia.co.uk](mailto:michelle@blackballmedia.co.uk)  
Twitter: @cardealermich



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# WELCOME.

**T**he car industry is never dull – that much is certain. You've got your ongoing news agenda such as the switch to EVs plus agency sales of course, as well as the ins and outs of daily dealership life. But there are also the stories that you didn't know you needed to know about. And then suddenly something major breaks – with another top news story for which you have to also instantly drop everything sometimes following hot on its heels.

It certainly keeps us all on our toes at Car Dealer Towers, but needless to say we thoroughly enjoy making sure that you're kept fully informed and up to date.

As such, as well as bringing you our regular four-page news digest, with articles from across the automotive spectrum boiled down (but with the full version just one click away of course), this issue we're also devoting pages 6 and 7 to news stories that we felt would benefit from having more room to breathe.

Of course, something big that dealers are keeping a weather eye on is the increasing interest in the UK by Chinese marques, and on pages 10 and 11 you'll find my interview with Victor Zhang, the UK country manager for Chery brands Omoda and Jaecoo, both of which have ambitious intentions for over here. He told me some really compelling stuff, so do be sure to check out what he had to say.

Have you voted in Car Dealer Power 2024 yet? No? Then you probably ought to get a wiggle on because [the survey](#) closes on Friday, May 17. This is where we give you the unique opportunity to vote for the best suppliers and manufacturers in the automotive world. It really is your golden chance to air your views on the best – and the worst. As the saying goes, if you don't vote, you can't really complain! Find out more on page 13.

Meanwhile, in another exclusive Car Dealer feature, Craig Cheetham writes about what could be a nice little earner for franchise holders – namely, electric vans. Want to find out how you could possibly increase your revenue stream? Of course you do! Then turn to page 15.

This is all on top of our regular offerings, such as reviews and features, which we're delighted to continue bringing to you for free, thanks to our wonderful advertisers.

What will next month hold? Stay tuned because we've got it covered! But in the meantime, I hope that you enjoy this issue.

“

**Something big that dealers are keeping a weather eye on is the increasing interest in the UK by Chinese brands.**

**JAMES BATCHELOR**

Associate editor



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## COURT

# Used car dealer jailed for multiple cases of fraud including selling 'death-trap' Citroen

- Simon Retallick pocketed some £101,000 via his scams
- One victim said he'd been left feeling suicidal
- Judge brands Retallick 'very epitome of a rogue trader'

**A** fraudulent and aggressive used car dealer whose scams included selling a 'death-trap' Citroen has been jailed for four years.

Simon Retallick, 43, pocketed approximately £101,000 after lying as well as making excuses and false promises.

He sold vehicles to his victims between 2018 and 2021 via his second-hand vehicle businesses S Retail (NE) Ltd and Glebe Motor Company online as well as from a garage in Stockton-on-Tees, reported BBC News. Prosecutor Anthony Pettengell told Teesside Crown Court that the vehicles 'were riddled with major faults' and didn't have any MOT certificates.

Retallick, of Fulthorpe Road, Norton, also sold the same cars a number of times to different people, then didn't give them the refunds he'd promised, and despite various successful claims made against him in the county court, he never coughed up what he was ordered to. The crown court was told he also became aggressive on numerous occasions, threatening people and lying about the refunds.

Cleveland Police said Retallick targeted 37 victims, mainly in 2020 during



by **John Bowman**  
john@blackballmedia.co.uk

lockdown, by falsely advertising the sale of vehicles on eBay. Because of lockdown, people couldn't see the vehicles in person. He'd then take money via bank transfer and spend months making excuses as to why the vehicle hadn't been delivered.

Among the victim statements, a man said Retallick left him feeling suicidal.

Each report was logged by the victims with Action Fraud and the Citizens Advice Consumer Service. The reports were then passed to Cleveland Police and Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's trading standards team for investigation.

Retallick admitted multiple fraud charges as well as perverting the course of justice. Mitigating, Sarah Barlow said his 'legitimate business' had come under financial strain, and she told the court Retallick had been 'robbing Peter to pay Paul' so as to 'keep his head above water', said BBC News. However, Judge Chris Smith called Retallick the 'very epitome of a rogue trader', often showing 'a complete disregard for safety'.

Simon Retallick (image via Teesside Police), and above, Teesside Crown Court (image via PA)



## AMONG THE HORROR STORIES GIVEN AS EVIDENCE:

- A £1,395 Citroen subsequently labelled a 'death trap' by a mechanic – it had dangerous brakes plus a collapsing driver's seat
- A BMW 4 Series that cost more than £15,000 but never turned up, nor was a refund given, with Retallick giving 'endless excuses and broken promises'
- A £4,000 Mercedes-Benz that was subsequently discovered to have failed its MOT and have a number of defects
- A £1,600 Vauxhall Corsa sold three times to different people – Retallick also didn't give them refunds he promised them
- A van that cost £2,250 but wasn't delivered and no refund was given – the victim was told by Retallick he didn't mind going to jail and that he'd 'done more time than Ronnie and Reggie [Kray]'
- Gloating to a pensioner over the phone that he had his money
- Telling another victim he'd spent their money on caviar and champagne

## MANIFESTO

## Consumer protection body wants car traders to be licensed as part of clampdown

THE Chartered Trading Standards Institute is calling for a licensing system for the motor trade amid a spate of dodgy dealers.

The consumer protection body, which trains trading standards officers, has published its 2024 manifesto, in which the used car market

is singled out as being among the most complained-about sectors by UK consumers.

In the manifesto, the CTSI says that interventions by trading standards officers prevented '£1.9m of consumer detriment' relating to used vehicles in the past four years.

The CTSI wants the next government to introduce tighter checks on car dealers, with a licensing system introduced. Details on how it'd work and be applied are limited, but the basic principle has been backed by the outfit's key stakeholders, lead officers and members.

EXIT

# Lookers chief operating officer Duncan McPhee quits firm after three years in top role



**L**ookers chief operating officer Duncan McPhee has quit the firm. The shock announcement was made on April 3 with his last day in the senior position and with the company two days later, Car Dealer was told.

It followed the termination of the 47-year-old's role as a director of subsidiary firm Lookers Ltd in February when the board was remodelled. At the time, Car Dealer was told that McPhee had been removed as director of the subsidiary but was remaining as chief operating officer of the dealership chain.

Kuldeep Billan, executive chairman of Lookers, told staff: 'After more than 15 years at Lookers, Duncan McPhee has decided to step down from his role as chief operating officer.'

'Last year was a transformational period for Lookers, as we transitioned from being a listed company on the London Stock Exchange to private ownership.

'Throughout this period of change, Duncan has played an important role and made a significant contribution. I am sure you will all join me in wishing him every success in the future.'

McPhee said: 'After nearly 16 years at Lookers, it is amazing how far the business has progressed and I am proud to have been a part of it.'

'One of the many highlights has been working with a fantastic team of people. I wish my colleagues and the Lookers business every success in the future.'

He became COO of Lookers in January 2021, having joined the company in September 2008 as a general manager. McPhee worked his way up through the ranks, becoming franchise director, divisional franchise director and chief retail operations director ahead of assuming the mantle of chief operating officer.

Before joining Lookers, he'd been with Arnold Clark for just over 10 years, starting as a sales executive and finishing as a general manager.

His exit was the latest in a series of high-profile departures at Lookers, which has been facing troubles.

CEO Mark Raban [left at the end of 2023](#) after just a few weeks' notice, as did CFO Oliver Laird. The dealer group was [taken off the stock market last October](#) after being bought out by Canadian outfit Global Auto Holdings in a [£504.2m deal](#) with funding from three Canadian banks. But it has hit problems since, making a [swathe of redundancies](#), with some 14.5% of the workforce at risk of losing their jobs.

Talks with financial institutions – including private equity firms and banks – are [understood to have taken place](#) as Lookers' new owner seeks to refinance the crippling 12-month loan that was used to buy the business.

'The original loan from the three banks was on a one-year term and it was always going to have to be refinanced, but with the market dipping in the UK it looks like it's proving harder to do than they thought,' a source told Car Dealer in January.

AMBITIONS

## Volvo officially drops diesel with XC90 as its final derv car

VOLVO has officially said goodbye to diesel.

The Swedish brand gave notice of its intention to drop diesel at Climate Week NYC last September and it's now become a reality. Its plant in Ghent made its final diesel-powered car – a V60 – in early February and now the sister factory in Torstlanda has turned out its last diesel car: an XC90.

The Geely-owned firm said the move heralded 'a big step towards our ambitions of becoming a fully electric car maker, as well as achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2040'. It said the success of its diesel cars had 'played a significant role in our evolution into a premium brand' but pointed out: 'In recent years, the electric revolution has evolved quicker than most of us could have imagined.'

Five years ago, most of the cars it sold in Europe ran on diesel, with electric models just starting to build momentum. But today, most of its sales on the continent are electrified cars. 'Last year, we increased our sales of fully electric cars by 70% and our global electric market share by 34%', it said.

Volvo added: 'While our future is indeed fully electric, our mixed portfolio includes some excellent plug-in hybrid and mild-hybrid models, which will act as a perfect bridge towards that future.'

The XC90 is scheduled to be replaced by the battery-electric EX90. However, production of the SUV is still continuing as a petrol and plug-in hybrid, and it'll continue to be sold alongside the EX90 for the foreseeable future, Volvo told Car Dealer.

# Dealers need strong relationships with suppliers to reap the rewards of a changing market

Black Horse's **Paul Hyne** and **Preston Rogers** chat to Car Dealer

**W**ith dealers having to sell more new electric cars than ever before while also navigating a stabilising used car market, having the right finance partner has never been so crucial.

The most agile car dealers will be reactive to a shifting landscape, and successful operators will be able to ride out uncertainties in the marketplace – whether that's cooling new electric car demand or fluctuating prices in the used car market.

'This year there will be uncertainties in the market – a good example is the upcoming general election, and uncertainties are generally a bad thing for consumer confidence,' says Black Horse's consumer distribution director, Preston Rogers. 'We will have these micro markets and the market is constantly shifting – dealers have to be anticipating the next thing. Will there be too many SUVs? Will there be too few EVs in the market? The best operators will have their finger on the pulse and they will be successful regardless of how the market moves.'

Used car dealers can protect themselves from the worst of what 2024 can throw at them by being receptive to trends and by being agile.

Just some of the challenges ahead are used car stock management, new car margin retention, the ZEV mandate, new entrant brands, and whether consumer confidence will hold up. But there are profit opportunities to be had, believes Rogers.

'If you look back at the years with huge used car volumes, it was a very volatile market,' he says. 'But if you were agile and you could move and adjust your stock quickly and adjust prices quickly, then profits could be made, and the same is true now – there is a huge opportunity for dealers.'

'Secondly, what are your processes like? Do you have discipline within teams of people to follow up on leads? Do you give great customer experiences? These aren't the most popular things to talk about but usually they make the biggest difference.'

Having the right finance partner is crucial in all of this, too, believes Paul Hyne, Black Horse and Lex Autolease commercial director.

'You've got to be partnered with the right finance provider to help you navigate the storm,' he says. 'A finance provider should be willing to engage with dealers about the products they are offering, about what customers are asking for, and how they can help them educate customers about EVs. Ultimately, they need to help dealers make the most of this new opportunity.'

'The good finance companies will be there to offer dealers stability. There are players in the finance market, us included, who are willing to have those conversations, and value long-term partnership with dealers rather than short-term tactical opportunities.'

Black Horse prides itself on having the right products for all types of cars. But with more dealers selling electric cars, having finance products that are tailored to EVs is crucial.

The firm, part of the wider Lloyds Banking Group, created a range of bespoke finance packages for EVs in quarter two of 2023, and it has seen a strong take-up of these from dealers.

With falling prices of electric cars seen over the past year, having the right tailored finance package on those vehicles is crucial, and it has made some used electric cars very appealing to both dealers and customers.

It's not just products that Black Horse is keen to help dealers with, though, but the wider education of consumers around electric vehicles.

Hyne explains: 'What the finance industry can do in collaboration with their dealer partners and the OEMs is help with the whole education piece around what it's like to live with an EV – Black Horse can do that in a number of ways.'

'We finance over 200,000 plug-in vehicles – one in five plug-in vehicles registered in the UK in 2023 was funded by Lloyds Banking Group. So, we've got lots of customers – we could ask them what their experience is.'

'We also have many renewal customers – so people that have moved into a second or third EV. We can play a bigger part in helping the narrative of myth-busting – if you want to call it that – and helping people understand what it really means to drive an electric vehicle compared to a petrol or diesel.'

'With that in mind, we have recently launched our EV Driving Hub. The hub provides the information customers need to know about used EVs, answering questions around things such as the safety and life of a used EV, alongside busting myths about charging, running costs and battery life.'

'We want the hub to become somewhere that dealers can point their customers to, to help them make well-informed decisions about buying an electric vehicle.'

'Driving and owning an EV may not be right for everybody, but there is no reason it can't be right for the vast majority of people. We can just expand our remit a bit to help stabilise the market overall and help customers make the right choice for them.'

From an industry perspective, the finance sector can help make the transition to electric cars easier for consumers, believes Black Horse consumer distribution director Preston Rogers.

'We need to remove those barriers into EV ownership,' he says. 'One thing the industry could do is to make it easier to finance EVs. So, for example, comparable terms with ICE vehicles, or changing how old cars can be when they are financed.'

He added: 'The government landscape is crucial, too. Firstly, charging – it's growing quickly but it's not in step with demand and the number of electric cars hitting the road.'

'Incentives are another big one – there is a question on whether we could have

“

This year there will be uncertainties in the market – a good example is the upcoming general election, and uncertainties are generally a bad thing for consumer confidence.

**Preston Rogers**

*Black Horse's consumer distribution director*

incentives on finance products, and incentives on the prices of EVs. That's probably the two big things that are missing right now.'

Financial incentives would be welcome but what's really needed is stability and aligned processes to really help get customers behind the wheel of EVs, believes Hyne.

'Any financial incentive is going to have a positive effect,' he says, 'but what I'm really looking for is stability. The chopping and changing of adding and removing grants, changing VAT, changing policy – it's making it very difficult for customers to make a choice.'

'We would be supportive of an aligned political and policy view between all of the

stakeholders – government, OEMs, dealers and the finance companies. We need that sort of stability and alignment between all of those groups so that we can put a consistent message out there to customers of both new and, importantly, used cars.'

He adds: 'We want to make EVs more accessible to all. Lloyds Banking Group's goal is to help Britain prosper. We've got a brilliant scale and platform to do that, and that's exactly what we intend to do.'



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*Black Horse's Preston Rogers, left, with Paul Hyne*

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Omoda 9

GRAND SCHEME

## Omoda and Jaecoo brands aiming for 100 dealers and 10,000 sales in the UK by the end of this year

- Omoda and Jaecoo brands are part of Chery – one of China's largest carmakers
- Plans for eight-car model line-up are under way along with 100-strong dealer network
- Chery is also considering building a factory in the UK



by **James Batchelor**  
@JRRBatchelor

**C**hery is preparing the ground for a rapid rollout of its Omoda and Jaecoo brands later this year by signing up more than 60 dealers and confirming an eight-model line-up – it's even weighing up plans to build a factory in the UK, bosses have told Car Dealer.

One of China's largest carmakers, Chery has already signed deals with over 60 partners in the UK, including Arnold Clark, Endeavour Automotive, Listers, Cambria, Greenhouse Group, Peoples and Martins Group.

The dealers will take both Omoda and Jaecoo brands, despite the latter not fully arriving until September, with most setting aside showroom space with existing franchises to display the brand's products. The showrooms will offer parts and servicing, too.

Omoda and Jaecoo will be run with traditional dealer agreements, not agency ones, confirmed UK country manager Victor Zhang, as the franchise model 'is a key pillar of our UK plans and a franchised network will give us a solid foundation for UK development,' he told Car Dealer.

While it already has more than 60 dealers signed up, Omoda and Jaecoo UK Ltd intends to expand the network very quickly during 2024, and is aiming to have 100 dealers and 10,000 sales on its books by the end of the year.

UK executives say around 40% of that 10,000 target is fleet, and they are confident of reaching the sales target, thanks to MG's recent successes in the market.

One key driver of its predicted success will be keen pricing. The first model to arrive will be a Nissan Qashqai-sized crossover called the Omoda 5, which will launch initially with a 1.6-litre turbo petrol engine in the first half of 2024 and will be joined by a 1.5-litre hybrid early next year.

It'll be packed with equipment to tempt buyers away from more traditional brands, with features such as dual 10.25-inch screens, 360-degree cameras, electric seats and acoustic glass coming as standard. All cars will also get a seven-year, 100,000-mile warranty.

Despite being a C-SUV-sized offering, the Omoda 5 is expected to be priced between £24,000 and £26,000, putting it toe to toe with a Nissan Juke or a Volkswagen T-Cross – two cars from the class below it.

“

*The UK government is showing a positive attitude towards foreign investment and the UK is a good possibility for us. We are taking this very seriously.*

**Victor Zhang**  
Chery UK country manager



*This is how the UK dealerships will look*



Omoda 5



Jaecoo 7



Omoda E5

Arriving at the same time as the Omoda 5 will be an electric version. Called the E5, it'll be powered by a 204bhp motor and a 61kWh LFP 'blade' battery, giving a claimed range of around 250 miles, and is predicted to be priced between £33,500 and £35,500.

The flagship Omoda 9 will arrive later in 2024 with the 5's 1.6-litre petrol engine, while a plug-in hybrid with an expected 800-mile combined petrol and electric range will follow soon after. It has a more premium look and feel inside and will be priced at the £35,000 mark.

A model to sit between the 5 and 9, called 7, will make its appearance in the UK next year, while a Nissan Juke-sized crossover called 3 will debut in late 2025 or early 2026 with a sub-£20,000 price tag.

The Jaecoo brand will arrive in dealerships around September, with the first model being a Hyundai Tucson-sized model called 7.

Chery views Jaecoo to be slightly more upmarket than sister brand Omoda, and the 7 reflects this with a large 14.8-inch touchscreen plus facial recognition technology. Its boxier design takes cues from brands such as Jeep and Land Rover.

The Jaecoo 7 will arrive initially with the 1.6-litre powertrain, priced around £35,000, with a plug-in hybrid version arriving later.

Chery intends to bring a larger Jaecoo plug-in hybrid SUV, called 8, to the UK later in 2025, followed by a smaller 5 in 2025.

Along with confirming the company's model plan and dealer network footprint, Zhang also revealed that Chery is considering opening a factory in Europe, with the UK high on the list of potential locations.

'Localisation is something the industry must be doing in the future – it is of great importance,' he said.

'The UK has a lot of potential and it has a unique positioning, especially with its universities linked to the car industry.'

'The UK government is showing a positive attitude towards foreign investment and the UK is a good possibility for us. We are taking this very seriously.'

“

*Localisation is something the industry must be doing in the future – it is of great importance.*

**Victor Zhang**



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## AWARDS

# HUNDREDS OF ENTRIES SO FAR... AND THERE'S STILL TIME TO ENTER!

- Car Dealer Power is YOUR chance to honour the top suppliers
- Manufacturers are named and celebrated
- Car Dealer Power 2024 survey closes on Friday, May 17

CarDealer®

# POWER 2024

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The MG4 was named Car of the Year in 2023, with the Volkswagen ID. Buzz and BMW i7 highly commended



by **James Batchelor**  
@JRRBatchelor

Entries have been rolling in for our annual [Car Dealer Power survey](#), with dealers keen to share their views on the best manufacturers and suppliers they work with. The survey was launched in February and we've already had hundreds of entries. Car Dealer Power shines the spotlight on the best suppliers and manufacturers in the automotive business, and the awards are unique because they're voted for by those who matter the most – the dealers.

The survey is your golden opportunity to honour the suppliers who have done you proud over the past year, as well as the car manufacturers that you think are the best to represent. It only takes a few minutes to fill out the survey form, so don't miss out. Last year, we received well over 1,000 entries, making Car Dealer Power a major event in the motor trade.

Winners and highly commended firms were named in 19 supplier categories, with the best car manufacturers to represent and the Car of the Year also being revealed.

From the best protection firms to finance providers, all supplier sectors are covered, allowing dealers to air their views on the best – and the worst.

This year sees the same number of supplier categories – check out the details in the panel on the right.

Car Dealer editor-in-chief James Baggott said: 'We always look forward to finding out what car dealers think of their suppliers and the manufacturers – it's a true barometer of the industry and some real surprises often emerge!'

Any car dealer can vote in the Car Dealer Power awards, while independents can skip straight to naming the best suppliers to do business with.

In 2023, the MG4 was named the Car Dealer Power Car of the Year – as voted for by dealers no matter what brand they represented – with the ID. Buzz and BMW i7 being highly commended.

Meanwhile, in the manufacturers section, Toyota made a stunning rise to the top of the table, knocking Kia off the perch after three consecutive wins.

Kia finished second and BMW third, while Honda was the biggest riser, leaping by 15 places from 21st in 2022 to sixth last year.

Jaguar was named the worst manufacturer to represent for the second year running.

The Car Dealer Power 2024 survey closes on Friday, May 17 and the awards will be announced via a special video on our website on Wednesday, June 26, so don't delay – [vote today!](#)

*We're looking for the cream of the crop in the following categories*

### SUPPLIERS

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Provenance Checks

Warranties

Paint Protection

Online Advertiser for New Cars

Online Advertiser for Used Cars

Finance (Sub-Prime)

Finance (Prime)

Personalised Video

Extra Mile Award

Product Innovation

### MANUFACTURERS

• Manufacturer of the Year

• Car of the Year

*Voting for this year's awards will close on Friday, May 17 – but don't delay!*

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## FEATURE

# Could electric vans be the next big revenue stream for your dealer business?

*The evolution of larger LCVs will have the biggest impact – and deliver the biggest returns for franchise holders, says **Craig Cheetham***

**E**lectric vans could be the next big money spinner for franchise holders, thanks to huge improvements in range, continued grant support and substantial price reductions, which have opened the market up to owner-operators and small-to-medium enterprise (SME) users who run individual vans or micro-fleets.

In April 2024, Stellantis's recently formed Pro One operation launched 12 new vans across the Citroen, Peugeot, Vauxhall, Opel and Fiat brands, with new electric models in three different body sizes. The move comes after the company announced that light commercial vehicles (LCVs) contributed to more than a third of its global revenue in 2023.

In each case, the new vans now all have a range of over 200 miles, while prices have been slashed across the plug-in line-up.

The new Citroen e-Berlingo, Peugeot e-Partner, Vauxhall Combo Electric and Fiat e-Doblo are now all available for around £26,000 after the government's plug-in van grant (PiVG), which continues to offer a payment of £2,500 towards a new electric LCV.

The continued rise in popularity of electric vehicles, a greater move towards leasing and a fall-off in aftersales income are all elements that are affecting dealership revenue streams in the current automotive retail environment, but while EVs have a substantial negative impact on aftersales, there are some great opportunities to be had through selling higher-value EVs such as vans to customers who also benefit from them.

Small electric vans have always had a good following, but it's the evolution of larger models that will make the biggest impact and deliver the biggest returns. For example, the new Vauxhall Movano Electric – the company's largest panel van with a 3.5-tonne gross vehicle weight – is now offered from £46,135 after the PiVG. That may sound quite steep, but it's a whopping £12,350 less expensive than the outgoing model, yet with a new 11kWh battery it has a WLTP-rated range of 261 miles – almost double that of its more expensive predecessor.

Speaking at the launch event, Brad Miller, head of LCV product & pricing for Stellantis Pro One UK, said: 'Electrification is core to our brand strategy and we're moving towards an electric majority as the infrastructure gets better. That tipping point isn't far away.

'Things are improving very quickly. Electric vans are getting better. Vauxhall will soon be an electric-only brand, and that means we need to make vans that appeal to all our customers. It's the biggest change in our industry for years and we're adapting quickly.'

Later in 2024, a new plug-in version of the market-leading Ford Transit Custom is also due to arrive with a 236-mile range. The Transit Custom was not only the UK's best-selling van last year, but also the UK's best-selling vehicle overall.

Among the models in the E-Transit Custom line-up will be a 286hp MS-RT model, which will be the most powerful Transit yet and uses M-Sport-designed rally-inspired features – proof, were it needed, that van makers are no longer just focusing on large fleets with their new electric models. Volkswagen has also announced a sporty GTX version of its ID.Buzz EV, which again is targeted at retail instead of fleet customers, while a plug-in version of the Isuzu D-Max pick-up is expected in 2025 – again, a vehicle aimed at smaller enterprise and single-vehicle users more than large fleets.



Ford E-Transit Custom MS-RT

“

*Vauxhall will soon be an electric-only brand, and that means we need to make vans that appeal to all our customers.*

**Brad Miller**

*Head of LCV product & pricing for Stellantis Pro One UK*



Isuzu D-Max Electric



Volkswagen ID. Buzz GTX

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## COMMENT

# What's in a name? Get set for nostalgia to play cynical part in sales fight

**W**hat's so special about names? Well, it would seem they're rather a big deal right now for some of our most well-known carmakers. I'm not talking about the Funky Cats and Seals of this world but the badges that have had a place in the history books.

Renault has already begun to go down the tricky terrain of memory lane. The reinvigorated French brand has brought back the Scenic name for 2024 – it's not attached to a spacious, curvy and slightly dull people-carrier but a very of-the-moment SUV that's powered by electricity. The car has some practical touches to keep it in step with its namesake and it's certainly roomy inside, but there's a lot of nostalgia going on here.

If that wasn't enough, Renault feels the world needs another 5, so one is coming along later this year complete with a plug to charge it up via and a wicker basket in which to store your baguette (no, I'm not making that up).

It'll quickly be followed by a new 4 with a more rugged, rational persona in contrast to the fashion-conscious 5, and Renault has also shown off a desire to bring back the Twingo with looks that ape the clever original.

And Renault's boss has hinted that even more golden-oldie names could make a return.

Volkswagen has pledged that the Golf, Tiguan (strangely) and GTI names are all safe and will have a future once the whole car world has gone electric, and it's strongly rumoured that Ford is bringing back the Capri. But before you race to grab your Bay City Rollers LPs from the loft, bizarrely the name is set to grace the rump of a coupe SUV that's based on a Volkswagen ID.5.

Then there's Vauxhall. We know that Monza and Insignia are due a revival, but the British brand has yet to confirm their return. In the meantime, we have the Frontera. Unlike Capri, the Frontera name is remembered for all the wrong reasons. While the three-door Sport did have an element of 1990s frivolity about it, the normal five-door version was a painfully dull truck that was imbued with little style or grace.

Factor in abysmal reliability, woeful driving dynamics and interiors that crumbled just by looking at them, it was hardly a triumph. And yet Vauxhall has decided to bring the nameplate back.

Someone in marketing obviously reckons this is a good idea, but I think it's strange because the basic ingredients of the car seem spot on and yet it'll wear a name that I think isn't fondly remembered. Admittedly, the new Frontera looks an awful lot better than the first one and a damn sight better than the hideous Crossland it replaces. It's the latest design from Brit Mark Adams' sketchpad and it's yet another good-looking Vauxhall. Of course, there's an electric version and it's bound to be less off-roadery than the original Frontera, but that's not necessarily a bad thing.

Perhaps I'm being too harsh here but I am genuinely interested to see if the revival of a name that to my mind has negative connotations will be a success. What's more interesting is that I think we're going to see more and more of this. With many new entrants arriving on the scene, primarily from China, and the parameters of making electric cars different from others pretty slim, the 'legacy' carmakers are going to be raiding their archives like mad. It'll be cynical, but brands such as Ford will be desperate for people to choose their cars over the upstart newcomers, and a name that tugs on the heartstrings of nostalgia will be the way to win over buyers.



“

*If that wasn't enough, Renault feels the world needs another 5, so one is coming along later this year.*

# Batch chat

**JAMES  
BATCHELOR**



*CAR DEALER'S  
ASSOCIATE  
EDITOR  
HAS HIS SAY*

**James  
Batchelor**

James – aka Batch – started at Car Dealer in 2010, becoming editor in 2013. He then worked for Auto Express and Carbuyer, went freelance in 2020, and became Car Dealer's associate editor in October 2021.



OUR MAN ON  
THE INSIDE  
SHARES HIS  
THOUGHTS  
ON THE CAR  
BUSINESS

## Who is Big Mike?

Well, that would be telling. What we can say is that he's been in the car trade for over 40 years so has probably forgotten more about it than we're likely to know.

## COMMENT

# Auction regular Slippery Sid's second hip flask helped him to bag Disco 2 bargains

**J**ust recently, I've been buying a few more cars out of the auctions than I have previously on the basis that there appear to be fewer private punters and roadside cowboys filling their ranks and bumping up prices.

There's also now a fair number of cars coming through that suit my traditional market – I love big old Volvos, Jaguars, Mercs and BMWs, which often take a while to sell but rarely come back and bite you on the bum.

These are sturdy, well-made motors that if they do go wrong, do so in a way that you can usually put right without ridiculous expenditure, rather than today's generation of small turbocharged engines with 'wet belt' engines, where the timing belt runs through the engine oil.

It may seem a bit old-fashioned to say we did things better back in the day but on this occasion it's an undeniable truth – rubber, oil and time tend not to mix, especially not when forced to be more powerful than they were originally designed to be. If you don't believe me, ask any roadside recovery operator. Anyway, we'll come back to the oil thing shortly...

As I'm sure many of you are aware, the entire process of buying cars at auction has changed substantially in recent times, especially since the Covid-19 pandemic reared its ugly head. Today, the vast majority of auction purchases are completed online.

As a result of that, most cars come with some form of inspection report – an 'essential check', 'condition report', or call it what you will, it's basically where an often-overworked staff member with a glorified iPad takes some photos of it, dips the oil and checks the tyre tread.

In some respects, the reports aren't worth a bean – but in others, they can be really useful, because if the car has more red marks than my school homework did back in 1978, it can put the lazy punters off. Yet sometimes, you can get four ticks for a fuse – if all of the electric windows have shut up shop, for example, when all that's required is a 99p circuit breaker under the dashboard.

Indeed, an acquaintance in the trade has used this to his advantage lately by befriending one of the iPad-wielders at our local sales house.

While I could never accuse anyone of doing anything nefarious, one thing I have noticed is that when a car comes through that fits his stock profile, it does tend to have more yellow spots on its report than there are on Mr Blobby.

This, in turn, has netted him some spectacular bargains, and I've not been entirely convinced when I've seen the cars in question that the faults were even there to start with – for example, yellow 'low tread' warnings placed against perfectly good tyres...

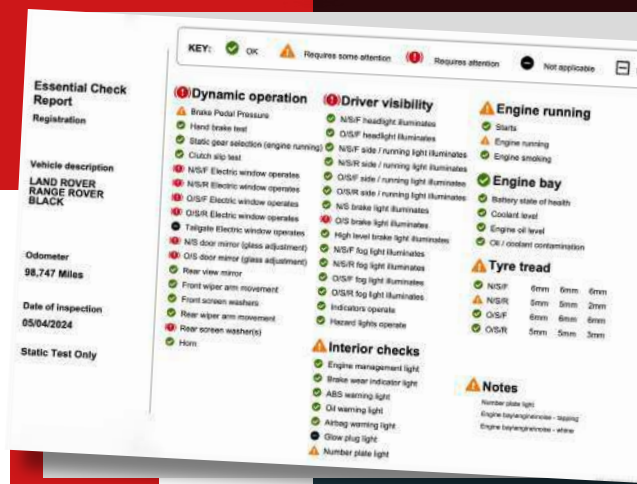
I'd never be that devious myself – although I do use these reports to my advantage. If a car has lots of red and yellow blobs for things that are



“

*The entire process of buying cars at auction has changed substantially in recent times.*





easy to put right, such as non-functional bulbs or windscreen washers, then I'll have a bid on the basis that a lot of the local motor trade are too lazy to read, if indeed they can even do so. After all, I'm not too worried about an inspection carried out by a non-qualified mechanic on a cheap car, which is nothing compared with the bad old days when the auction house was full of traders trying to pull the wool over each other's eyes.

I remember one local guy: Slippery Sid as he was known to his not-exactly-mates, who is no longer with us but was a bit of a local legend.

Sid used to take two hip flasks to the auction house with him. Part of this was because he was an alcoholic and an occasional swig of Irish whiskey was needed from the first one to get him through the day. The second flask contained engine oil – which was a similarly golden colour just in case anyone was looking.

This was back in the days when the Td5-engined Land Rover Discovery 2 was still hot property on the used car market. They were good sellers but they also had a bit of a reputation for head gasket failure, which is where Sid's extra hip flask came in.

Before the sale, he'd go to inspect the upcoming sale stock and would tip a little bit of the oil from his spare flask into the header tank of Disco 2s that were coming through the block, so that by the time they reached the sales room after sitting outside idling, there was enough back pressure in the coolant system to create an oily, frothy mess.

The hammer would come down well below book as a result and Sid would take a celebratory swig from his other hip flask to mark a job well done. Apart from the one time I switched the flasks round in his pockets while he was having his lunch. That, dear readers, remains one of my proudest and funniest moments...



“  
The inspection reports can be really useful, because if the car has more red marks than my school homework did back in 1978, it can put the lazy punters off.”

# CAR NEWS ROUND-UP

Manufacturers have been refining their models and producing new ones. We look at some of the results...

Genesis  
Neolun and  
the Magma,  
below



## GENESIS

### The shape of things to come as Neolun and GV60 Magma concepts are revealed

GENESIS has revealed two concepts that showcase what we can expect from some of the South Korean firm's EVs in the future.

Neolun, which means 'New Moon', shows that Genesis cars of the future will have innovative features with a luxurious feel.

On the exterior, the Neolun does without a

B pillar and there are electric side steps that automatically operate to help when getting in and out of the vehicle. Inside is an 'Ondol' system that uses direct heat from under the floor to give warmth throughout.

The Magma performance series, meanwhile, will consist of four models,

starting with a hotter version of the firm's GV60 electric SUV and boasting improved battery performance and technology over the regular model.

The interior has bucket seats with body-coloured seatbacks that are trimmed in a combination of nappa and suede leather.



Dacia  
Sandero  
Stepway

## DACIA

### Stepway and Sandero are given updates

DACIA buyers can now get the Sandero Stepway Extreme model with a turbocharged TCe petrol engine that produces 108bhp and can return 45.6mpg.

Meanwhile, the standard Sandero now has a trim level called Journey, which will be the flagship model in the Sandero range.

As standard, the Sandero Journey boasts features including automatic air conditioning, rear parking sensors, a reversing camera, an electronic parking brake, blind spot warning and MediaNav infotainment system with an eight-inch screen.

## HYUNDAI

### i30 receives fresh look plus SmartSense feature as standard

THE Hyundai i30 has received an updated design with new connectivity and safety features.

On the exterior, the radiator grille, fog lamp housing and rear bumper insert have been redesigned, while all versions now come with LED headlights and tail-lights as standard – as well as new 16-inch wheel designs.

It also boasts a 4.2-inch colour LCD display, three USB-C charging ports for the front and rear, over-the-air map updates and an optional 10.25-inch digital screen. Hyundai's SmartSense safety feature, which includes collision avoidance, comes as standard now, as does lane-following assist.



## ALPINE

### A290 will make its debut at Le Mans



THE world debut of the hotly anticipated Alpine A290 will take place at the 24 Hours of Le Mans in June.

The city car, which shares the new Renault 5 E-Tech's platform, was showcased last year in concept form and is the first electric model in Alpine's range. Further details will be revealed nearer then.

Prices and specifications are still unconfirmed for the UK market but expect a premium over the Renault 5 E-Tech's starting price of some £23,000.

## LAMBORGHINI

### Logo updated after more than 20 years

LAMBORGHINI has updated its logo after more than 20 years.

It's part of a new strategy that claims to reflect on 'brave, unexpected and authentic' values.

The famous bull remains but the colours used in the outline, the bull itself and the company name have been toned down.

The lettering is broader and the 3D-effect look has gone, with a bespoke font called *Automobili* now being used.

In addition, the bull will be individually used for social media platforms for the first time.

[CLICK HERE TO WATCH THE LAMBORGHINI REBRAND VIDEO](#)



## TOYOTA

### Revised GR Yaris hot hatch going on sale from £44,250

TOYOTA has revealed prices and specifications for its updated hot hatchback – the GR Yaris.

The GR Yaris first went on sale in 2020, and for 2024 Toyota has improved it even further, with four versions.

The standard GR Yaris with a six-speed manual gearbox will cost from £44,250, jumping to £45,750 for the eight-speed automatic gearbox. Two special editions will be available, too – the Ogier and Rovannerpa will each have a six-speed manual 'box and price tag of £60,000 but offer different driving modes.

Customers will be entered into a ballot to try to secure an allocation of a GR Yaris.



## HONDA

### e:NY1 electric SUV price cut by £5,000



HONDA has cut the price of its entry-level e:NY1 to help boost its appeal and try to persuade people to switch from ICEs.

The electric SUV went on the market in 2023, but to help with sales Honda has now sliced the price of the entry-level e:NY1 Elegance from £44,995 to £39,995.

The higher-spec e:NY1 Advance has the same price tag of £42,195 and boasts features such as a heated steering wheel, power tailgate and panoramic glass roof.

Order books will open on April 23.

## VAUXHALL

### Griffin trim for Mokka Electric makes it cheapest of its type

THE electric version of the Vauxhall Mokka has just had a price cut thanks to a new trim level – Griffin.

The Mokka Electric Griffin now starts from £29,495, making it the cheapest new electric SUV – and £7,115 less than the original entry-level Mokka that started from £36,610.

On the outside, the Mokka Electric Griffin gets 17-inch alloy wheels, tinted rear windows, LED headlights, tail-lights and daytime running lights, as well as a contrasting black roof.

Inside is a seven-inch colour touchscreen with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, plus a rear-view camera as well as a seven-inch digital instrument cluster.



## HYUNDAI

### Mid-life facelift given to Tucson for 2024



THE Tucson has been given an updated look for 2024 as the current generation enters middle age.

The front and back bumpers have been redesigned and new skid plates fitted. There are also larger LED daytime running lights and a half-mirrored effect in the grille.

New alloy wheel designs are on offer as well as five new paint colours: Cypress green pearl, Ecotronic grey pearl, Ultimate red metallic, Jupiter orange metallic and Sailing blue pearl.

## MERCEDES

### G-Class tweaked inside and out

MERCEDES has updated its G-Class for 2024 with mild-hybrid tech plus an improved exterior and interior design.

The tweaks include a new radiator grille with four horizontal louvres plus redesigned bumpers, while the reversing camera has been moved to the bumper's centre. Inside is Mercedes' MBUX infotainment system for the first time in a G-Class. It also boasts a 48V mild-hybrid system with differing power outputs.

Meanwhile, an electric version is on the way as well.



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# NEWS DIGEST

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SHAKE-UP

## Diana Torres made head of Nissan GB



NISSAN'S senior UK management team has undergone a shake-up with Diana Torres being appointed MD and Nicolas Belaud made aftersales director.

Torres has replaced Andrew Humberstone and Belaud took over from Chris Marsh. Torres said: 'I look forward to leading a highly capable team who – together with our valued dealer partners – have delivered fantastic results in recent years.'

Belaud said: 'I'm delighted to be joining the team at Nissan GB at a very exciting time.'

EXPANSION

## Genesis begins sales in Leeds



GENESIS has begun sales of its premium luxury vehicles in Leeds.

The Hyundai-backed brand arrived in the UK in May 2021, opening Studio concepts in shopping centres.

Currently operating remotely via Stratstone, Genesis Leeds is now offering the South Korean marque across West Yorkshire.

Jonny Miller, brand director at Genesis Motor UK, said: 'This is a significant step forward for both the brand and our Genesis customers in West Yorkshire.'



## Holden Group launches expanding care hub to enhance overall customer service experience

HOLDEN Group has launched a care hub that it says will give its customers the highest level of service.

It's been created to provide consistent, outstanding service across the group's seven dealerships, which cover East Anglia. The team will be able to address maintenance needs, as well as service and MOT appointment scheduling, and Holden Group said customers will receive 'exceptional service with prompt and accurate responses'. Hub manager Bethany Metcalf said: 'I am absolutely thrilled to bring this new venture to our valued customers. Our goal is to enhance the overall customer service experience.'

ACQUISITION

## Group 1 is to buy Inchcape for £346m



INCHCAPE is to sell off its UK retail operations after agreeing on a £346m acquisition by US dealership giant Group 1 Automotive.

The American outfit has operated in the UK since 2007, representing 15 brands at 55 dealerships.

Once the deal is rubber-stamped, Inchcape shareholders will receive £100m of the proceeds via a share buyback programme, which is expected to be completed within 12 months.

“

*A name that tugs on the heartstrings of nostalgia will be the way to win over buyers.*

James Batchelor  
p17



HOTEL

## Aston Martin makes a five-star move



ASTON Martin has reinforced its luxury credentials by opening a showroom at a top hotel in Tokyo.

Aston Martin Ginza – set within the five-star Peninsula hotel – follows last June's opening of the brand's first global flagship location at Q New York.

Boasting an area of 324 square metres, it displays three Aston Martin models and doubles the manufacturer's presence in the Japanese capital.



**‘The new C-HR is a fine replacement for what was a very successful car.’**

Forecourt: p30

**INQUEST**

## Coroner says Dan Kirby took own life



TRADE Price Cars founder Dan Kirby took his own life after his business went into liquidation, an inquest has been told.

Car Dealer reported that Kirby died [last September](#) aged just 37.

At a documentary inquest on April 12, Essex coroner Michelle Brown said a voluntary liquidator was appointed to Trade Price Cars less than a week before his death and Kirby had struggled with that. She concluded that the ex-Used Car Awards winner committed suicide.

**ROW**

## Alfa Romeo forced to rename Milano



ALFA Romeo’s first EV will no longer be called the Milano after the name sparked a huge row between Stellantis and the Italian government.

The car is to be built at Stellantis’s Tychy plant in Poland, but Italian law strictly prohibits the sale of products with Italian-sounding names if they aren’t produced in the country.

As a result, the car will now be known as the Alfa Romeo Junior, with the change designed to ‘promote mutual understanding’.

**LAUNCH**

## Online showroom for luxury used cars



GREENHOUS Group has launched an online showroom specialising in used performance and prestige cars.

Lumen’s collection of vehicles can only be viewed by appointment at the Shrewsbury showroom.

Kris Sage, Greenhous Group’s head of prestige and performance, said: ‘We are thrilled to be bringing Lumen to the marketplace. Our goal is to provide an unmatched experience for customers in both service and quality when it comes to prestige and performance cars.’

**EVENT**

## Snows customer gets grand result in draw



A LUCKY motorist from Southampton has scooped £1,000 in a Snows Motor Group prize draw.

Alex Pearson won it in the event celebrating Snows’ used car sale.

He bought a 23-plate Corolla from Snows Toyota Southampton and was automatically entered into the draw.

The cash will go on a holiday deposit as well as on tree surgery.

GENERAL MANAGER GARETH TAYLOR IS PICTURED LEFT PRESENTING ALEX PEARSON WITH HIS WINNINGS

“

*I love big old Volvos, Jaguars, Mercs and BMWs, which often take a while to sell but rarely come back and bite you on the bum.*



Big Mike  
p18

**SITE**

## New Suzuki location for Ron Brooks Group



RON BROOKS Motor Group is to open a Suzuki site in Derby.

The showroom will be on Pentagon Island – one mile from the centre of Derby – and will officially open on May 1.

The family-owned dealership has been partnered with Toyota for 50 years and Suzuki for 10. It currently has locations in Ilkeston and Mansfield, where its existing Suzuki franchise sits (pictured above via Google Street View).



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# NEWS DIGEST

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**HARMONY**

## Orchestra hook-up is music to the ears



PORSCHE Centre Preston and a crowdfunder have led to the return of an orchestra for the city.

Preston has been without its own orchestra since the early 1960s but that's no longer the case, following a corporate partnership with the dealership and the online crowdfunder.

Amy Lancaster-Hall, the centre's marketing boss, said: 'Supporting the arts is important to us.' PICTURED ARE ORCHESTRA MARKETING MANAGER ALEXANDER ROE, LEFT, AND ORCHESTRA SECRETARY PAUL HEPTINSTALL

**MOVE**

## Listers upgrades Volvo showroom



LISTERS is opening a new Volvo site in Worcester in April after a multi-million-pound redevelopment project.

It is moving the business from a site in Hereford Road to a state-of-the-art new facility in Bromyard Road with 14 EV chargepoints.

Head of business David Westwood said: 'This is a significant investment for us and we're looking forward to welcoming existing and new customers to our future-ready home.'



**ACHIEVEMENT**

## Eden Motor Group shines the spotlight on its best staff as 21 Excellence Awards are handed out

TOP-PERFORMING staff at Eden Motor Group have been honoured at the new and used car dealer chain's Excellence Awards.

The event saw 21 winners nominated by their colleagues, and CEO Graeme Potts – pictured front row, right, with the winners – said: 'These awards recognise excellence at the very top level across our company. We handed out 21 awards in total, but it could so easily have been 40 or 60, given the sheer number of people who were recommended by their colleagues.'

**REORGANISATION**

## Hyundai to cut its tally of UK dealers



HYUNDAI is to cut back on how many UK dealership partners it has in a bid to 'future-proof' its network.

It told Car Dealer that the long-term reorganisation would see it reducing the current tally of partnerships from 70 to 55 by 2028-29 but the number of showrooms would be going up from 165 to 173.

And it emphasised that it wouldn't be targeting smaller, family-run dealerships in favour of the larger, more profitable dealer groups.

**CONSOLIDATION**

## Pentagon absorbs Motus LCV dealers



MOTUS Group UK has consolidated its LCV dealer network in a bid to simplify its business.

Pentagon Motor Group, a subsidiary of the [Car Dealer Top 100](#) outfit, has now absorbed Motus Commercial into its operations.

Both arms of the Motus Group were already running LCV dealerships and the move to bring them together aims to avoid confusion, said Pentagon MD David Peel, pictured.

**379**  
THE RENAULT SCENIC E-TECH ELECTRIC'S POSSIBLE RANGE IN MILES

Forecourt  
**p26**



# Make time to check out the latest cool products

Feature: p32



## PROMOTION

### Ex-apprentice is now service manager



FJ Chalke has appointed a new service manager to run its Yeovil Nissan site.

Alfie Mann has been promoted to the position just five years after he joined the outfit as an apprentice in the service department. Mann, who has worked at the Yeovil site since completing his initial training, said: 'I am delighted to have been promoted and I look forward to the challenges ahead.'

MD Steve Fowler said the promotion was well deserved.

## INVESTMENT

### Lookers opens first Car Hub concept



LOOKERS has thrown open the doors of its first new and used multi-franchise Car Hub concept.

The plan was [revealed to Car Dealer last April](#) and now the site in Middlesbrough has opened to the public after a £6m investment.

It focuses on all-electric driving and specialises in multi-franchise vehicle sales, service, maintenance and cosmetic repairs, as well as having standalone dealerships for Ford and BYD.

## AWARDS

### JLR shines spotlight on top dealerships



LLOYD Jaguar Carlisle and Pentland Land Rover Perth won the overall Jaguar and Land Rover 'Retailer of the Year' titles respectively at JLR's annual awards.

Several other businesses were honoured in categories including sales and authorised repairer.

Patrick McGillicuddy, MD of JLR UK, told of his pride in the network.

PICTURED ARE LLOYD JAGUAR CARLISLE HEAD OF BUSINESS STEVE TRICKETT, LEFT, AND PATRICK MCGILLYCUDDY

## SEALED

### Dicksons completes buy-out by managers



DICKSONS of Inverness has completed a multi-million-pound management buy-out – with the aim of doubling turnover to £100m before 2030.

The motor group's new five-strong board of directors, pictured above, also forecasts staffing levels reaching 100 in that timeframe.

MD Fraser Bryce, front, said: 'It cements our plans to remain in private ownership while expanding further across the Highlands automotive landscape.'

## VIDEO

### Treasures revealed at abandoned site



A TIME WARP of a car dealership has been found abandoned with an astonishing array of vehicles, parts and manuals.

Mystery surrounds why it was left as it is, but with workers' clothes still in their cupboards and offices still full of dealership business material, it's like the automotive equivalent of the Mary Celeste.

The dealership is in France, and YouTuber The Bearded Explorer took a video camera inside to reveal all.

## SUPPLIER

### Ineos saddles up with horse trials



INEOS Automotive has signed a deal with the Badminton Horse Trials as its official vehicle supplier up to and including 2026.

Visitors to this year's equestrian extravaganza, which takes place from May 8 to 12, will be able to get behind the wheel of a Grenadier and take it round the estate's off-road course. Badminton Horse Trials event director Jane Tuckwell said: 'We very much look forward to seeing the Grenadier 4x4s in action.'

## BITE-SIZE

Click on the text box for the full story

**CROWN:** Tesla has regained its title as the world's best-selling electric carmaker from BYD despite sales in 2024 Q1 falling sharply. It delivered 386,810 vehicles from January to March – a near-9% drop on the 423,000 it sold in the same period in 2023.

**CHANGE:** Bournemouth and Poole Car Sales has appointed liquidators after accruing debts totalling £430,700. The site has been taken over by G.W. Hall & Son, which said it wasn't affiliated to the dealership, adding its business was affluent.

**DEAL:** Bahrain has officially completed its takeover of McLaren. It's hoped the deal with the Gulf state's sovereign wealth fund Mumtalakat will secure the long-term future of the brand following heavy losses over recent years.

**RISING:** UK car production rose again in February – up 14.6% to 79,907 units, according to latest SMMT figures. It was the sixth month of growth in a row and the best February performance since 2021, when 105,008 cars were made, said the trade body.

**EXIT:** Bentley Motors chairman and CEO Adrian Hallmark has left the luxury carmaker to head up Aston Martin. He had held the twin roles since February 2018 and will be replacing Amedeo Felisa as Aston's chief executive by October 1 at the latest.

FORECOURT

# RENAULT SCENIC E-TECH ELECTRIC

## Power

The single electric motor produces 217bhp, 300Nm of torque and a range of up to 379 miles.



The original Renault Scenic was loved by families in the Nineties and Noughties. Now it's been rebooted and **James Batchelor** has driven it.

## WHAT IS IT?

The original Renault Scenic was a very rational and spacious-efficient car, and it pretty much created the small MPV concept that became so very popular during the Nineties and Noughties. But people-carriers fell out of fashion over the past three decades, leading Renault to axe the Scenic in 2019. Now the name is back – not on a practical-though-slightly-dull MPV but, you guessed it, on a fully electric SUV.

## WHAT'S NEW?

Renault doesn't call the Scenic E-Tech Electric an SUV, however. It prefers the term 'family car', but there's no doubt it has SUV proportions. The manufacturer says it channels the original's fanatical attention to practicality with spacious rear head and legroom, and plenty of cubby holes. And while it doesn't wear the original's 'Megane Scenic' badge, it is still the larger and more spacious sister to the Megane E-Tech in the French firm's range.

## WHAT'S UNDER THE BONNET?

There's a 60kWh battery giving a claimed WLTP range of 260 miles, while the larger – and predicted best-seller – 87kWh battery should be good for 379 miles. The smaller-batteried model gets a 168bhp motor, while the 87kWh is powered by a 217bhp motor. Both are front-wheel drive with no dual-motor versions.

## WHAT'S IT LIKE TO DRIVE?

Tipping the scales at 1,730-1,890kg, the Scenic certainly isn't a featherweight, but it's more than 200kg less than its chief rival the Peugeot E-3008. That makes a huge difference to the way it drives, as it feels light and noticeably more nimble than the Peugeot. Sure, this isn't an exciting car to drive, but it doesn't need to be. What it does extremely well is give a super-comfortable and polished driving experience, with a well-controlled ride, light steering and lovely linear power delivery. It's quiet – very quiet, in fact – and drives like a far more expensive electric SUV. That is at normal and motorway speeds, though – at a walking pace, the Scenic emits a pedestrian warning sound composed by the musician Jean-Michel Jarre, along with a whole host of other chimes and welcome greeting tunes.

## HOW DOES IT LOOK?

There's little evidence of the boxy lines that previous Scenics so proudly wore. Instead,

## THE KNOWLEDGE

### Renault Scenic Iconic E-Tech Electric 220hp Long Range

Price (as tested): **£45,495**

Powertrain: **Single  
electric motor**



Power:  
**217bhp**



Torque:  
**300Nm**



Max speed:  
**106mph**



0-60mph:  
**7.7 seconds**



Range:  
**Up to 379 miles**



Emissions:  
**0g/km CO2**

Renault has gone for a more SUV-like shape to tempt the current wave of family buyers who favour SUVs over MPVs. Having said that, with a slightly elongated roof line and the wheels pushed to the car's corners maximising the wheelbase, there is a nod to earlier Scenics' focus on space. It wears the latest version of Renault's corporate face, with the brand's diamond logo repeated across the entire front end, while neat aero blades front and rear aid efficiency. It's a rather good-looking car, we feel, and doesn't suffer from the bloated look so many electric SUVs tend to suffer from.

**WHAT'S IT LIKE INSIDE?**

It feels really rather plush. The large 12-inch portrait touchscreen is a cinch to use thanks to its Google operating system, and we love the physical controls for the air conditioning. The Scenic also comes with a stunning sunroof that becomes opaque instead of a traditional glass roof and sunblind combo. Different panels can be made opaque to give shade at a touch of a button – the type of feature you'd expect on a £100,000 limousine.

In the back, leg and headroom is very impressive and there's a treat when you fold down the centre armrest. Opening it reveals a couple of USB-C charging ports and swivelling cup-holders plus natty holders to place smartphones and tablets.

**Cabin**

The 12-inch portrait touchscreen is a cinch to use, while the sunroof that becomes opaque at the touch of a button is stunning.



“

The Scenic is a handsome family SUV with a more-than-decent electric range for most families, and it has a lovely interior that feels plush.

**Style**

The Scenic has the latest version of the maker's corporate face.



**TARGET BUYERS:**

Family buyers, mostly. Maybe even some die-hard Scenic fans.

**THE RIVALS:**

Peugeot E-3008  
Volkswagen ID.4  
Skoda Enyaq

**KEY SELLING POINTS:**

1. Strong build quality
2. Spacious interior
3. Clever technology

**DEAL CLINCHER:**

It offers far more value for money than many of its rivals.

**WHAT'S THE SPEC LIKE?**

The Scenic is very well equipped. We'd imagine the entry-level Techno trim will be all that most buyers will want, especially with features including the standard-fit 12.3-inch digital driver's display, 12-inch touchscreen and Google operating system, wireless phone charging, electric tailgate, rear camera, plus heated front seats and steering wheel. The interior is at its best in mid-range Esprit Alpine trim with its blue carpets, flashes of alcantara trim and the occasional Tricolore dotted around, while the top-spec Iconic adds luxuries such as a Harmon Kardon sound system, the aforementioned panoramic sunroof, a digital rear view mirror and hands-free parking.

**WHAT DOES THE PRESS THINK?**

Autocar said: 'Easy to gel with on the road, has a long range and is really lovely inside, but its lack of versatility disappoints.'

**WHAT DO WE THINK?**

The Scenic is a handsome family SUV with a more-than-decent electric range for most families, and it has a lovely interior that feels plush and has a number of clever features. On this first impression, the Scenic could be the new electric family SUV benchmark.

## FORECOURT

# SUZUKI SWIFT

### Power

The 1.2-litre, turbocharged three-cylinder mild-hybrid engine makes 81bhp and 112Nm of torque.



## THE KNOWLEDGE

### Suzuki Swift 1.2 Mild Hybrid Ultra manual

Price (as tested): **£19,799**

Engine: **1.2-litre, turbocharged three-cylinder mild-hybrid petrol**



Power:  
**81bhp**



Torque:  
**112Nm**



0-60mph:  
**12.3 seconds**



Max speed:  
**103mph**



MPG (combined):  
**64.2**



Emissions:  
**99g/km CO2**

As big names axe their superminis, you might think these cars were unpopular. But not Suzuki as it launches a new Swift. **James Batchelor** got behind the wheel of one...

### WHAT IS IT?

Small cars aren't hot property right now. That's certainly the view of carmakers that are concentrating on other projects, with some preferring to follow the large profits on offer from SUVs, while others are going all-in on electric cars. But not Suzuki. The firm feels there's still a huge need for small, light, efficient and well-priced small cars, and with rivals such as Ford, Kia and Nissan abandoning this market, it thinks customers are being ignored. So, it's launched a new Swift to appeal to this rather sizeable group of people.

### WHAT'S NEW?

While some car manufacturers are tweaking their older models to keep them on life support until an electric replacement arrives, Suzuki is starting afresh. The design, though similar to previous Swifts, is new, the interior is new and just when carmakers are cancelling the development of new petrol engines, Suzuki has crafted a totally fresh one. It's only really the platform that's not shiny new as it's a development of the old model's.

### WHAT'S UNDER THE BONNET?

Let's talk about that engine then. It's a 1.2-litre unit with three cylinders, replacing the old four-cylinder unit, and has a stout 81bhp and 112Nm of torque. It comes as standard with a five-speed manual gearbox – yes, you read that right – or for £1,250 more you can have it with a CVT. The engine also comes with a 12V mild-hybrid system to help with efficiency – speaking of which, at 64.2mpg it's right at the top of the tree for fuel economy, not to mention the cleanest by coughing out just 99g/km of CO<sub>2</sub>. Suzuki is even offering a four-wheel-drive version with a 25mm increase in ride height – it arrives later this year.

### WHAT'S IT LIKE TO DRIVE?

Suzuki certainly knows how to build engines, as the little 1.2 spins sweetly, and despite three-cylinder units characteristically being a little on the rough side, it's smooth. There's more than enough punch in the low end of the rev range, meaning it's ideal around town, while the gearbox is a delight – it's light and precise to use.

The old Swift always had a slightly overly firm suspension set-up, and although engaging to drive, it was always outshone by a Fiesta. This new one is quieter on the move, it's slightly softer and deals better with bumps and potholes, and with the Fiesta being no more, the Swift is arguably the class leader for handling – the fact that the car is very light





**Style**  
The new design gives the Swift a handsome look that distinguishes it from its rivals.



(it weighs under 1,000kg) certainly helps here. It's a very enjoyable car to drive and a lovely contrast to often overly heavy EVs.

**HOW DOES IT LOOK?**

The design is completely new, but there are some clear carry-overs from previous Swifts, such as the 'floating' roof, tall front headlights and neat rear end. There are some very noticeable differences, though, such as the wide, open-mouthed grille now without the Suzuki badge, and the crease that wraps around the whole of the car. This line is most noticeable at the front as it forms the leading edge of the clamshell bonnet, but sadly it has the look of the bonnet not being closed properly. It's still a handsome car, though, and looks distinctive from its rivals.

**WHAT'S IT LIKE INSIDE?**

The interior is covered in hollow, cheap-feeling plastics but the Swift's interior feels well screwed together, looks good and we'd bet it won't fall apart. The high-mounted nine-inch touchscreen doesn't have the most attractive software around, but as wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto come as standard, you won't be using it that much. Happily, Suzuki hasn't followed some rivals by burying the heat controls in the touchscreen as there's a row of buttons for that, and there's even a manual handbrake. Space in the rear is good, and at 265 litres (expanding to 980 with the seats folded), boot space is about right, too.

**WHAT'S THE SPEC LIKE?**

The Swift is surprisingly very well equipped and keenly priced. There's just a simple two-model line-up, with entry-level Motion getting 16-inch alloys, LED headlights, sat nav, rear parking sensors and camera, adaptive cruise control, wireless smartphone connectivity, heated seats and a whole host of safety equipment. It starts at £18,699 and undercuts a number of rivals, including the Fabia, i20, 208 and Corsa. Ultra, from £19,799, tops the range and gets polished alloys, automatic climate control plus electric folding mirrors. The four-wheel-drive Swift will cost £21,049 when it arrives later this year.

**WHAT DO THE PRESS THINK?**

Top Gear said: 'Suzuki has admirably stuck to its "smaller, neater, lighter" philosophy in updating the Swift.'

**WHAT DO WE THINK?**

A new supermini with a petrol engine and manual gearbox may sound like an anachronism in 2024 but the Swift will appeal to a whole host of customers. Its keen pricing and frugality will be enough to win over most buyers. However, this is also a well-packaged small car brimming with character, thanks to an eager engine and sharp handling.

**“**  
Its keen pricing and frugality will be enough to win over most buyers.



**TARGET BUYERS:**

Fiesta fans who still want a hatchback and not a crossover.

**THE RIVALS:**

Renault Clio  
Hyundai i20  
Skoda Fabia

**KEY SELLING POINTS:**

1. Fun to drive
2. Keen pricing
3. Comfortable ride

**DEAL CLINCHER:**

Offers stunning value and shows small cars can still be fun and affordable.

**Inside**  
The cabin looks good and is well screwed together. Apple CarPlay and Android Auto come as standard.



# TOYOTA C-HR



*This quirky hybrid hatch has the looks but are they backed up by a decent driving experience? **Jack Evans** tried one out.*

#### WHAT IS IT?

The updated C-HR arrives with a striking new look alongside an efficient hybrid setup that is so required by fuel-conscious buyers.

#### WHAT'S NEW?

There's a focus on space, plenty of robust materials that can cope with family life and a usable amount of boot room at 388 litres. As well as this standard hybrid model, there's a plug-in hybrid version, which can deliver up to 41 miles of electric-only range.

#### WHAT'S UNDER THE BONNET?

Its performance stats are on par for the segment and flag up the C-HR's real focus – efficiency – because with a combined figure of 60.1mpg, this small Toyota is remarkably good on fuel.

#### WHAT'S IT LIKE TO DRIVE?

It's a very quiet car – even at motorway speeds – and when coupled with the electric-only running at slower paces it all makes for a very relaxing driving experience. The ride is a touch firm, though. You do need to drive it in a more sedate manner to get the best from it.

#### HOW DOES IT LOOK?

The C-HR is anything but boring with its angular, futuristic appearance helping it to make quite the impression. It's available in a number of striking colour combinations.

#### WHAT'S IT LIKE INSIDE?

The interior of the C-HR isn't quite as quirky as its exterior but that's no bad thing. Build quality is good overall, with some harsher plastics found lower down. It feels a big step up when you compare it with its predecessor, though.

#### WHAT'S THE SPEC LIKE?

Prices start at £31,290 and at that entry-level Icon grade you get 17-inch alloy wheels, an eight-inch infotainment screen with Apple CarPlay as standard plus automatic air conditioning. Step up to Design grade – from £34,865 – and those wheels increase to 18-inch machined versions, while inside there's a larger 12.3-inch infotainment system. It's also at this spec where the plug-in hybrid setup becomes available.

#### WHAT DO WE THINK?

The new Toyota C-HR is a fine replacement for what was a very successful car. It's been radically improved inside, feeling far more premium and well made than before. In its higher trim levels, the C-HR can start to feel a bit expensive, but opt for a cheaper version and, coupled with its efficient powertrain, this can be a good-value option. The plug-in hybrid would be a good choice for drivers who can charge up at home, but given the efficiency of this regular hybrid version, you'll still get plenty of fuel savings when picking this 'standard' C-HR.



## THE KNOWLEDGE

### Toyota C-HR GR Sport

Price (as tested):	<b>£40,645</b>
Powertrain:	<b>1.8-litre petrol engine with electric motor</b>
Power:	<b>138bhp</b>
Torque:	<b>N/A</b>
Max speed:	<b>106mph</b>
0-60mph:	<b>10 seconds</b>
MPG (combined):	<b>60.1mpg</b>
Emissions:	<b>105g/km CO<sub>2</sub></b>

#### TARGET BUYERS:

*The good build quality, efficient running and striking looks will appeal to many drivers.*

#### THE RIVALS:

Nissan Juke  
Seat Ateca  
Renault Arkana

#### KEY SELLING POINTS:

1. Efficient running
2. Standout looks
3. Lots of interior tech

#### DEAL CLINCHER:

*The C-HR is efficient, good looking and well made inside – what's not to like?*



#### Inside

*Build quality is good overall, with some harsher plastics found lower down.*



*What I think makes Close Brothers different is that **we have a relationship built on trust.** It feels like a real **partnership** - they truly care about my business.*

**David Wilson**  
Henson Motor Group



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# COOL STUFF

*We've got some superb products to check out this month as we move further into spring and onwards to longer days. Swatch, Specialized and Samsung are among the companies making an appearance in the list – so dive right in and see what's at the cutting edge of gadgets at the moment for you to splash your cash on!*

## **Bang & Olufsen and Ader Error speaker – £450**

BANG & Olufsen is well known for its high-end audio equipment, which makes its recent partnership with luxury South Korean brand Ader Error even easier to work out.

The pair have teamed up to create a new top-notch portable speaker, which gets an eye-catching blue colour scheme and Ader Error's logo on the grille.

Expect pristine sound – as you'd get from a usual B&O system – while an optional strap can transform the speaker into a natty handbag.



## **Specialized Porto – £5,500**



THE cargo bike segment has exploded in recent years as riders have looked for more practical two-wheeled options. The Porto, from Specialized, is one of the latest additions to this flourishing sector and it's a model packed with user-friendly features.

It's got a front and rear rack – rated to carry 20kg and 60kg respectively – while a 90Nm electric motor can help boost the Porto up to a rated top speed of 15.5mph for a five-hour period. Nice!



## **Samsung Bespoke Jet Bot Combo – £799**

ARTIFICIAL intelligence is entering all walks of life and Samsung recently announced that it would be integrating the technology into some smart home-cleaning appliances.

The Bespoke Jet Bot Combo combines an AI-controlled vacuum and mop system that can intelligently recognise the space around it and even any stains that have cropped up. Sure, it's an expensive proposition, but cutting-edge technology on this set-up could quickly take the backache out of cleaning.



## **Swatch x Omega Swatchwatch Mission to the Moonphase – £240**

SWATCH'S collaboration with Omega on its run of more finance-friendly 'Moonswatches' has had a big impact on the watch scene and now there's another addition to the range – the Mission to the Moonphase. It's got the same ceramic finish as the standard Moonswatch line-up but, for the first time, there's a moon phase function.

You might notice that the famous cartoon character Snoopy appears in various areas of the watch as well – the iconic beagle has been Nasa's mascot since the 1960s, which ties into the original Omega Moonwatch's history as being the first timepiece on the moon.

# SUPPLIER NEWS

A ROUND-UP OF WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING ACROSS THE UK

## WSG

### Most common used car parts to fail revealed



ALTERNATORS are the most likely part to fail on a used car, according to research by a warranty company.

Warranty Solutions Group (WSG) analysed data exclusively for Car Dealer from across its policies.

Alternators comprised 12% of all claims, followed by batteries and coil springs at 6.06% alike.

Meanwhile, the Honda Jazz was the most reliable used car, comprising just 2.28% of cars claimed for.

## CHARITY



### Ben Ball 2024 to evoke 1920s glitz and glamour

TICKETS for this year's Ben Ball in aid of the automotive industry charity are now on sale.

It will take place at Old Billingsgate Market in London on December 11 and have the theme of the Roaring '20s, boasting a night of glitz, glamour, vintage charm and timeless elegance. Matt Wigginton, director of partnerships, engagement & income, said: 'Ben Ball is a critical fundraising event as it brings in vital donations.' Tickets can be bought [here](#). LAST YEAR'S BALL IS PICTURED ABOVE

## FCA

### Some insurers 'giving lower offers on claims'



THE Financial Conduct Authority says it has found evidence to suggest that some insurers are offering customers less than their written-off or stolen vehicle is worth – and in some cases only raising the offer when a complaint is made.

It follows a survey sent to 12 firms that together make up an estimated 70% of the market and comes despite previous warnings that insurers mustn't undervalue cars or other items when settling claims.

“

Experts and industry commentators expect the used car market to bounce back this year.

Richard Pygott

p39



## ACQUISITION

### Agreement reached for Keyloop to buy ATG



AUTOMOTIVE Transformation Group is to be taken over by Keyloop after the two firms reached a 'definitive agreement' over an acquisition.

The deal, for an undisclosed fee, will see ATG join forces with the automotive tech giant in a move that bosses say will 'help retailers and OEMs improve the customer experience.'

Barring any last-minute hitches, the agreement will be rubber-stamped in the coming months.

## FUNDING

### Bumper lands £2m for further expansion



FINTECH firm Bumper has secured £2m from manufacturer Suzuki and dealer group owner Marubeni in a fresh funding round.

The investment – an extension to the earlier Series B round – takes the total ploughed into the company in both rounds to £42m. Co-founder and CEO James Jackson, pictured right with co-founder Jack Allman, said: 'We can accelerate our plans to be the dominant payment platform for car dealers across Europe.'

# BUSINESS NEWS

A ROUND-UP OF WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING AROUND THE WORLD



RESCUED

## Majestic saves Vagabond from administration

MAJESTIC has completed a rescue deal to buy wine bar chain Vagabond from administration.

The UK's largest specialist wine retailer confirmed talks about a potential move in March after Vagabond Wines went into insolvency. Majestic then said on April 5 that it had completed the acquisition, which will secure the future of nine Vagabond venues and 171 workers. The chain, which lets people order a variety of wines from self-pouring machines, was founded in 2010.

APPOINTMENT

## Emily Shelley to head up PA Media Group



EMILY Shelley has been appointed as the new chief executive at the PA Media Group.

She began her career with PA as a graduate trainee 25 years ago and is the first woman to lead the business in its 155-year history, replacing Clive Marshall, who is retiring after 14 years at the helm.

It holds a stake in Car Dealer's parent company the Baize Group.

TOP JOB

## Emma Gilthorpe to take the helm at Royal Mail



ROYAL Mail has ended its hunt for a new boss after appointing Heathrow Airport chief operating officer Emma Gilthorpe to the helm.

Owner International Distributions Services said Gilthorpe will join the group on May 1 then become Royal Mail's chief executive in the summer following a handover with interim boss Martin Seidenberg. She has worked at Heathrow since 2009.



PIPED

## Cheers as MV Glen Rosa ferry launched on Clyde

ONE of two late and over-budget ferries has been launched at a shipyard on the River Clyde.

There were cheers from those watching as the MV Glen Rosa was piped into the water at the Ferguson Marine shipyard in Port Glasgow on April 9. The ferry and her sister vessel the Glen Sannox are now some six years late and will cost around three times the original price of £97m. Glen Rosa will be able to carry up to 852 passengers plus at least 127 cars when she enters service.

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**ENVIRONMENT**

## Water firms' owner delays rating target

*THE company behind South West Water and Bristol Water has abandoned its ambition to reach a four-star environmental performance rating in 2024, blaming 'current operating conditions'.*

*Pennon Group said it now doesn't think it'll achieve the four-star result until 2025. It expects to be given a two-star rating for the second year in a row for 2023, meaning it 'requires improvement' under Environment Agency rules.*

**TECHNOLOGY**

## Microsoft to open AI hub at offices in London



MICROSOFT is to open a new artificial intelligence hub in London to work on its AI products and research into the technology.

The US tech giant recently announced the creation of Microsoft AI, a new team within the company to focus on AI, led by Mustafa Suleyman, the British co-founder of AI giant DeepMind, which is now owned by Google. Suleyman said the new AI hub will be based at Microsoft's offices in Paddington and will create jobs.

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# INDUSTRY VIEWS

NEWS AND THOUGHTS FROM **CAR DEALER LIVE**

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*Some three in four new cars advertised on Auto Trader have a discount on them and that's grown quite a lot – around 15% on the prior year.*

**Ian Plummer**  
Auto Trader's  
commercial director



## AUTO TRADER

### Manufacturers will continue to slash new car prices to stimulate demand

**C**armakers are expected to continue slashing new car prices to try to stimulate current 'sluggish' retail demand, says Auto Trader.

New car registration figures for March from the SMMT showed a 10.4% rise, and represented the 20th consecutive month of growth.

However, behind the headlines, the sizeable uplift was entirely due to booming sales in the fleet sector, which rose by a whopping 29.6%. The private market, though, slumped by 7.7%, with the SMMT blaming a 'challenging economic backdrop of low growth, weak consumer confidence and high interest rates'.

With car manufacturers pushing new cars into the market, they are turning to discounting to spur consumers to buy – and it's only set to continue, believes Auto Trader.

Speaking on Car Dealer Live, the firm's commercial director, Ian Plummer, said:

'We're now in a market where demand is probably below the level of supply – and when that happens, you need to stimulate demand and that's what we are seeing. Manufacturers

are stimulating interest in their vehicles to help them stand out and drag people out of used cars and into new ones.

'Some three in four new cars advertised on Auto Trader have a discount on them and that's grown quite a lot – around 15% on the prior year. The actual amount that is being discounted has grown from around 5-6% a year ago to nearly 9%.

'This level of push is even greater with electric, which is getting around an 11% discount. Electric is the point in the market where the pressure is being felt most keenly.' He added: 'All of this activity [discounting] will need to continue to grow as private retail demand remains looking sluggish – it's going to need a bit more stimulus.'

Plummer insisted the new car market wasn't overheating but was very much in a 'push' phase, where the balance of supply and demand has tipped in favour of supply.

Elsewhere in the interview, Plummer chats about how carmakers will try to meet the 22% EV quota in the ZEV mandate, and whether Chinese manufacturers will really make a dent in the UK new car market.

## CAP HPI

### Used car prices fall by 0.1% in March – but market remains 'stable'

**U**sed car prices nudged down by 0.1% in March showing there's 'stability' in the market, Cap HPI has told Car Dealer.

Trade values of second-hand cars at the three-year, 60,000-miles mark dropped by 0.1%, or £70, after rising by the same figure in February.

This followed another 0.1% fall in January off the back of a 10.5% drop seen in the final three months of 2023, prompting the firm to declare

the current used car market as 'stable'. March 2024's 0.1% fall is the third strongest March-into-April monthly movement since 2019.

Speaking exclusively to Car Dealer, Cap HPI senior valuations editor Mark Bulmer said March reinforced the view that the first quarter of the year was 'strong' and there was a 'positive' feeling within the motor trade.

'March was a stable month – it's good not to

see much fluctuation in prices,' he said.

'The devil is in the detail though, as some prices have moved up markedly, particularly on petrol cars as dealers are all chasing the same vehicles, while there has been a downward movement on other sides of the market, and some of the older, higher-mileage vehicles have been difficult to move through this month.'

Cap HPI predicts April will be a quiet month.



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# FINANCE NEWS



COMMISSION

## Car finance firms ‘could be facing millions of claims’



by **John Bowman**  
john@blackballmedia.co.uk

**M**illions of claims could be lodged by drivers who may have overpaid on their car finance, as the emerging issue has the potential to be ‘on a par’ with the PPI scandal, a consumer compensation expert has said.

The Financial Conduct Authority is currently reviewing whether people could be owed compensation for being charged too much for car loans.

The regulator is looking into hidden and unfair commission arrangements on loans taken out between 2007 and 2021. Simon Evans, boss of the Consumer Redress Association, which represents claims management firms, said people were likely to have bought more than one car during that period, which could more than double the number of claims.

Evans suggested that the scale of those affected had the potential to be ‘on a par’ with the PPI scandal that saw UK banks pay out billions of pounds in compensation to people who were mis-sold personal protection insurance from the mid-1990s.

‘If you think about the number of people who have bought cars in the past decade and a half, there is a swathe of people who will have bought it in that way,’ he said, referring to the discretionary commission arrangements.

‘What we are seeing through our member firms who are engaging with consumers at the moment is that actually each person has an average of about 2.3 claims. So they have had two or three cars in that period and all of those qualify for a claim.’

This is likely to cause a ‘large headache’ for car finance companies, Evans said. Lloyds Banking Group, which owns Black Horse, the UK’s largest car finance lender, is setting aside £450m to cover potential costs related to the review, while Close Brothers Group, which has a motor finance arm, revealed plans to bolster its finances by £400m.

FLA

## First growth in business volumes since 2022

LATEST figures from the Finance & Leasing Association show that consumer car finance new business volumes grew in February by 1% to 159,427 cars versus the same month in 2023.

The corresponding value of new business was similar to February 2023 at £2.686m.

The consumer new car finance market reported new business higher in value by 4% at £817m than in February 2023, while new business volumes fell by 5% to 29,986.

However, the consumer used car finance market reported a 2% fall in the value of new business in February to £1.869m year on year, while new business volumes increased by 2% to 129,441 cars.

Geraldine Kilkelly, director of research and chief economist at the FLA, said: ‘February saw the consumer car finance market report its first growth in new business volumes overall since October 2022, supported by another positive month for the used car finance market.’

She added that the FLA was predicting that the value of car finance new business in 2024 will hold steady at £39bn.

## First Response

take care of your finance



# TIME IS MONEY

**RICHARD PYGOTT**

*A MONTHLY LOOK AT THE WORLD OF AUTOMOTIVE FINANCE AND MARKETING*

## Used car omens are good so make hay while sun shines

**T**he clocks have gone forward and with them, the dark, damp, depressing darkness of a seemingly endless winter has finally been banished. Spring has sprung and summer is on the horizon, and I am personally looking forward to more daylight hours, the occasional late-night barbecue and even perhaps a holiday!

I've felt the same way about the motor trade over the past few years, too. It has felt like the clock of progress had stalled a little and we were stuck in an endless winter of doubt and uncertainty.

However, the season of change is upon us and 2024 just has a different 'feel' to it. I like to keep my ear to the ground, and the tone of people's expectations has changed recently, too. The feeling is that experts and industry commentators expect the used car market to bounce back this year.

The results of a survey recently conducted by Auto Trader of 25,000 used car buyers points to a return to consumer confidence in the used car market, especially around affordability.

So, it looks like it could be a record year for used car sales, but this all depends on what kind of vehicles dealers choose to stock and how they decide to price them. The decrease in the value of typical ICE stock and the 'price correction' we saw in the electric vehicle market over the past 12 months doesn't mean that we are out of the woods yet.

I still think the prospects for the rest of the year are very positive, and the findings by Auto Trader are very encouraging too, so I think 2024 could be a fantastic year for dealers selling used cars on finance.

Considering the opportunities ahead, I seriously think that dealers are going to need a flexible, adaptable finance company that understands used car buyers who need to finance their next used car.

Call me biased, but it's my opinion that dealers have got to consider partnering with First Response Finance in 2024. I've worked for the company for more than 14 years now and in that time I've spoken with thousands of dealers, and they love how flexible our criteria are, how hard we work to get deals over the line and – most common of all – how good our service is come rain or shine.

As the old saying goes, you have to make hay while the sun shines! So, if you don't currently work with First Response Finance and would like to discuss how we can help you make the most of the rest of the year, click [here](#) to get in touch, [visit our dealer site](#) to find out more, or give us a call on 01156 711755.



“

*I think 2024 could be a fantastic year for dealers selling used cars on finance.*

### **Richard Pygott**

is digital marketer for First Response.

Call him on 0115 946

6365 or email [richard.pygott@frfl.co.uk](mailto:richard.pygott@frfl.co.uk)

[richard.pygott@frfl.co.uk](mailto:richard.pygott@frfl.co.uk)

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🌐 [frfl.co.uk/car](http://frfl.co.uk/car)

# STATISTICS

THE LATEST REGISTRATION FIGURES

SMMT  
SALES DATA

MARCH/YEAR TO DATE

INCREASE

## March sees 20th month of growth in row for new car sales with 10.4% rise



by **John Bowman**

john@blackballmedia.co.uk

**M**arch saw the UK new car market enjoy its 20th consecutive month of growth with a 10.4% rise in registrations and 317,786 new cars hitting the road, according to latest figures from the SMMT.

What is typically the busiest month of the year thanks to the new numberplate was the best March performance since 2019, although it was still 30.6% below pre-pandemic levels when March of that year saw 458,054 registrations.

The trade body said the growth was once more driven by fleet investment – up 29.6% as the sector continues to recover after the constrained supply of previous years.

Registrations by private buyers fell by 7.7%, though, courtesy of ‘a challenging economic backdrop of low growth, weak consumer confidence and high interest rates’.

Meanwhile, the small business registration sector dropped by 8.0%.

Petrol cars kept hold of the lion’s share of the market at 55.7% and 177,019 units, with registrations up 9.2% year on year, but diesel volumes fell by 2.7% to 23,312, accounting for just 7.3% of demand.

Uptake of hybrid-electric vehicles reached record levels, though, rising by 19.6% to 44,550 units and 14.0% of the market, while the biggest percentage growth was recorded by plug-in hybrids – they were up by more than a third to 24,517 units, or 7.7% of all new registrations.

However, although battery-electric vehicle (BEV) registration volumes were at their highest recorded levels at 48,388 units, market share fell by one percentage point from the same month last year to 15.2%. Registrations were up by 3.8%, with only fleets showing any volume growth.

The SMMT said the fall in BEV market share within a growing market underscored the need for the government to support consumers to speed up fleet renewal.

Manufacturers themselves are offering generous incentives – the SMMT cited What Car? research showing that EV discounts have risen by 204% since January 2023 – which was helping more drivers switch to zero-emission vehicles and deliver government and industry carbon targets, but this can’t be sustained indefinitely, said the industry body.

It said a full market transition needed incentives for private retail buyers as well, not just for fleet and business buyers, which would bring the UK into line with other major markets.

SMMT chief executive Mike Hawes said: ‘Market growth continues, fuelled by fleets investing after two tough years of constrained supply. A sluggish private market and shrinking EV market share, however, show the challenge ahead. Manufacturers are providing compelling offers, but they can’t single-handedly fund the transition indefinitely.

‘Government support for private consumers – not just business and fleets – would send a positive message and deliver a faster, fairer transition on time and on target.’

TOP  
10

CARS SOLD IN  
MARCH 2024



Model	Regs
Nissan Qashqai	<b>8,931</b>
Ford Puma	<b>8,318</b>
Kia Sportage	<b>7,445</b>
Nissan Juke	<b>7,346</b>
Audi A3	<b>6,010</b>
Vauxhall Corsa	<b>5,952</b>
Mercedes-Benz A Class	<b>5,892</b>
Volkswagen Golf	<b>5,631</b>
Tesla Model Y	<b>5,602</b>
MG HS	<b>5,460</b>

[Click here to see our top 10 rolling sales charts for March 2023 to March 2024](#)

“Manufacturers are providing compelling offers, but they can’t single-handedly fund the transition indefinitely.”

**Mike Hawes** SMMT chief executive



Figures supplied by SMMT

Marque	MARCH 2024		MARCH 2023		% change	YEAR TO DATE				% change
	2024	% market share	2023	% market share		2024	% market share	2023	% market share	
Abarth	153	0.05	62	0.02	146.77	282	0.05	88	0.02	220.45
Alfa Romeo	196	0.06	223	0.08	-12.11	329	0.06	357	0.07	-7.84
Alpine	90	0.03	49	0.02	83.67	150	0.03	87	0.02	72.41
Audi	18,454	5.81	19,039	6.61	-3.07	32,462	5.95	32,698	6.62	-0.72
Bentley	147	0.05	250	0.09	-41.20	245	0.04	413	0.08	-40.68
BMW	20,065	6.31	14,463	5.02	38.73	36,771	6.74	25,846	5.23	42.27
BYD	759	0.24	34	0.01	2,132.35	1,278	0.23	34	0.01	3,658.82
Chevrolet	1	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	1	0.00	0	0.00	0.00
Citroen	4,870	1.53	5,328	1.85	-8.60	9,374	1.72	9,555	1.93	-1.89
Cupra	3,982	1.25	2,952	1.03	34.89	6,983	1.28	5,267	1.07	32.58
Dacia	4,993	1.57	4,078	1.42	22.44	8,325	1.53	7,577	1.53	9.87
DS	184	0.06	337	0.12	-45.40	370	0.07	796	0.16	-53.52
Fiat	3,387	1.07	3,369	1.17	0.53	5,259	0.96	5,943	1.20	-11.51
Fisker	10	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	207	0.04	0	0.00	0.00
Ford	17,026	5.36	20,415	7.09	-16.60	32,567	5.97	36,423	7.37	-10.59
Genesis	141	0.04	176	0.06	-19.89	218	0.04	361	0.07	-39.61
GWM Ora	310	0.10	188	0.07	64.89	422	0.08	214	0.04	97.20
Honda	7,919	2.49	4,766	1.66	66.16	12,182	2.23	8,274	1.67	47.23
Hyundai	13,570	4.27	13,532	4.70	0.28	23,480	4.30	24,087	4.87	-2.52
Ineos	38	0.01	0	0.00	0.00	70	0.01	0	0.00	0.00
Jaguar	4,690	1.48	1,940	0.67	141.75	6,759	1.24	3,278	0.66	106.19
Jeep	1,609	0.51	462	0.16	248.27	2,489	0.46	1,022	0.21	143.54
KGM	385	0.12	0	0.00	0.00	603	0.11	0	0.00	0.00
Kia	18,478	5.81	19,703	6.85	-6.22	33,084	6.06	32,255	6.53	2.57
Land Rover	12,376	3.89	11,260	3.91	9.91	18,572	3.40	15,803	3.20	17.52
Lexus	2,758	0.87	1,450	0.50	90.21	3,863	0.71	2,559	0.52	50.96
Maserati	91	0.03	196	0.07	-53.57	156	0.03	317	0.06	-50.79
Maxus	1	0.00	3	0.00	-66.67	1	0.00	3	0.00	-66.67
Mazda	4,628	1.46	4,986	1.73	-7.18	7,467	1.37	8,705	1.76	-14.22
Mercedes-Benz	19,794	6.23	16,443	5.71	20.38	28,543	5.23	23,683	4.79	20.52
MG	12,934	4.07	12,232	4.25	5.74	23,138	4.24	20,679	4.18	11.89
Mini	6,484	2.04	7,503	2.61	-13.58	12,594	2.31	12,047	2.44	4.54
Nissan	20,559	6.47	16,994	5.90	20.98	33,403	6.12	25,950	5.25	28.72
Peugeot	11,944	3.76	8,715	3.03	37.05	21,306	3.91	15,006	3.04	41.98
Polestar	803	0.25	1,620	0.56	-50.43	1,298	0.24	3,522	0.71	-63.15
Porsche	3,128	0.98	3,690	1.28	-15.23	4,848	0.89	6,054	1.22	-19.92
Renault	8,783	2.76	3,773	1.31	132.79	14,664	2.69	8,401	1.70	74.55
Seat	6,041	1.90	4,868	1.69	24.10	11,150	2.04	9,778	1.98	14.03
Skoda	9,982	3.14	7,492	2.60	33.24	18,451	3.38	17,008	3.44	8.48
Smart	306	0.10	42	0.01	628.57	531	0.10	81	0.02	555.56
SsangYong		0.00	257	0.09	0.00		0.00	418	0.08	0.00
Subaru	641	0.20	445	0.15	44.04	899	0.16	581	0.12	54.73
Suzuki	5,049	1.59	4,376	1.52	15.38	7,676	1.41	6,901	1.40	11.23
Tesla	6,995	2.20	10,493	3.65	-33.34	11,768	2.16	13,355	2.70	-11.88
Toyota	16,886	5.31	19,253	6.69	-12.29	26,193	4.80	31,748	6.42	-17.50
Vauxhall	15,553	4.89	12,091	4.20	28.63	28,664	5.25	22,854	4.62	25.42
Volkswagen	22,147	6.97	21,747	7.56	1.84	41,331	7.58	40,991	8.29	0.83
Volvo	7,526	2.37	5,663	1.97	32.90	13,623	2.50	11,915	2.41	14.33
Other British	533	0.17	590	0.20	-9.66	862	0.16	902	0.18	-4.43
Other imports	387	0.12	277	0.10	39.71	637	0.12	424	0.09	50.24
<b>Total</b>	<b>317,786</b>		<b>287,825</b>		<b>10.41</b>	<b>545,548</b>		<b>494,260</b>		<b>10.38</b>

# LCV NEWS

## DEMAND

## Bumper March as sales near the 53,000 mark



by **John Bowman**  
john@blackballmedia.co.uk

MORE than 50,000 new LCVs joined UK roads in a bumper March for fleet renewal.

Releasing the latest figures, the trade body said more businesses upgraded to the very latest models than in any other month during the past three years.

A total of 52,916 new vans, 4x4s and pickups were registered – up 11.1% year on year as Britons increasingly depend on vans for everything from online shopping to local trades. March 2021 saw 56,122 units registered.

The Ford Transit Custom was March's best-selling LCV by far with 7,809 units shifted, while its Transit stablemate was second with 4,864. The Blue Oval's Ranger came third with 2,881 and in fourth place was the Volkswagen Transporter at 2,773.

Figures supplied by SMMT

### REGISTRATIONS OF NEW COMMERCIAL VEHICLES LESS THAN 3.5 TONNES

Marque	MARCH 2024		MARCH 2023		% change	YEAR TO DATE				% change
	2024	% market share	2023	% market share		2024	% market share	2023	% market share	
Ford	18,132	34.27	15,710	32.98	15.42	29,856	31.49	28,413	32.56	5.08
Volkswagen	5,617	10.61	4,821	10.12	16.51	9,842	10.38	8,764	10.04	12.30
Vauxhall	4,354	8.23	3,800	7.98	14.58	8,701	9.18	7,728	8.86	12.59
Citroen	4,258	8.05	4,419	9.28	-3.64	7,826	8.25	7,546	8.65	3.71
Peugeot	3,831	7.24	3,258	6.84	17.59	6,440	6.79	6,006	6.88	7.23
Renault	3,826	7.23	3,321	6.97	15.21	6,377	6.73	6,859	7.86	-7.03
Toyota	2,906	5.49	2,730	5.73	6.45	6,285	6.63	4,873	5.58	28.98
Mercedes	2,702	5.11	2,823	5.93	-4.29	5,889	6.21	5,429	6.22	8.47
Fiat	1,306	2.47	1,040	2.18	25.58	2,418	2.55	1,918	2.20	26.07
Land Rover	1,267	2.39	1,061	2.23	19.42	1,997	2.11	1,539	1.76	29.76
Nissan	1,253	2.37	1,212	2.54	3.38	2,016	2.13	1,914	2.19	5.33
Isuzu	695	1.31	787	1.65	-11.69	937	0.99	1,272	1.46	-26.34
Iveco	675	1.28	536	1.13	25.93	1,535	1.62	1,182	1.35	29.86
Maxus	581	1.10	457	0.96	27.13	1,832	1.93	810	0.93	126.17
MAN	349	0.66	552	1.16	-36.78	581	0.61	943	1.08	-38.39
Suzuki	326	0.62	105	0.22	210.48	556	0.59	122	0.14	355.74
Renault Trucks	316	0.60	377	0.79	-16.18	783	0.83	905	1.04	-13.48
KGM	244	0.46	0	0.00	0.00	335	0.35	0	0.00	0.00
Isuzu Trucks	179	0.34	238	0.50	-24.79	380	0.40	426	0.49	-10.80
Ineos	34	0.06	0	0.00	0.00	90	0.09	0	0.00	0.00
Fuso	34	0.06	56	0.12	-39.29	51	0.05	96	0.11	-46.88
Dacia	28	0.05	22	0.05	27.27	78	0.08	68	0.08	14.71
BYD	0	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	4	0.00	0	0.00	0.00
LEVC	3	0.01	2	0.00	50.00	3	0.00	36	0.04	-91.67
SsangYong	0	0.00	307	0.64	0.00	0	0.00	423	0.48	0.00
<b>Total light CV</b>	<b>52,916</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>47,634</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>11.09</b>	<b>94,812</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>87,272</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>8.64</b>

### REGISTRATIONS OF NEW COMMERCIAL VEHICLES 3.5 TONNES TO 6.0 TONNES

Figures supplied by SMMT

Marque	MARCH 2024		MARCH 2023		% change	YEAR TO DATE				% change
	2024	% market share	2023	% market share		2024	% market share	2023	% market share	
Ford	277	29.28	158	24.38	75.32	560	28.14	282	22.65	98.58
Fiat	246	26.00	120	18.52	105.00	455	22.86	265	21.29	71.70
Mercedes	177	18.71	255	39.35	-30.59	389	19.55	434	34.86	-10.37
Peugeot	134	14.16	39	6.02	243.59	243	12.21	86	6.91	182.56
Iveco	29	3.07	18	2.78	61.11	144	7.24	58	4.66	148.28
MAN	20	2.11	0	0.00	0.00	61	3.07	0	0.00	0.00
Citroen	19	2.01	8	1.23	137.50	41	2.06	22	1.77	86.36
Volkswagen	17	1.80	3	0.46	466.67	25	1.26	5	0.40	400.00
Maxus	13	1.37	34	5.25	-61.76	24	1.21	58	4.66	-58.62
Vauxhall	10	1.06	8	1.23	25.00	39	1.96	27	2.17	44.44
Renault	2	0.21	2	0.31	0.00	2	0.10	4	0.32	-50.00
Isuzu Trucks	1	0.11	2	0.31	-50.00	6	0.30	3	0.24	100.00
Renault Trucks	1	0.11	1	0.15	0.00	1	0.05	1	0.08	0.00
<b>Total heavy CV</b>	<b>946</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>648</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>45.99</b>	<b>1,990</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>1,245</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>59.84</b>

# SUPPLIERS GUIDE

LOOKING FOR A MOTOR TRADE SUPPLIER? YOU CAN FIND THE DETAILS OF SELECTED COMPANIES HERE

## Auctions & Trade-To-Trade Sales

### BCA

W: bca.co.uk

T: 0344 875 3480

E: customerservices@bca.com

**Info:** BCA's remarketing programmes deliver volume, choice and availability for buyers, and speed, efficiency and market-leading returns for sellers.



## Finance



### First Response

W: dealer.firstresponsefinance.co.uk

T: 0115 671 1755

E: marketing@frfl.co.uk

**Info:** First Response is an award-winning UK finance company providing simple financial solutions. Get in touch and let us help increase your profits.

## Lead Management



### iVendi

W: ivendi.com

T: 0330 229 0028

E: tellmemore@ivendi.com

**Info:** iVendi delivers a fully connected platform that engages consumers, converts buyers and manages transactions of vehicles online and in the showroom.

## Trade Bodies



### Ben

W: ben.org.uk

T: 0800 131 1333

**Info:** Ben is a not-for-profit organisation that partners with the automotive industry to provide support for life to its people and their families.

## Warranty Providers



### Händler Protect

W: handlerprotect.com

T: 0800 088 7889

E: sales@handlerprotect.com

**Info:** Händler Protect is an exclusive dealer warranty provider. Proud to partner and represent more than 1,000-plus 'active' independent motor dealers across the UK each month.

## Automotive E-Commerce

### ATG

W: atg.auto

T: 0844 264 3519

**Info:** Leading provider of retailing solutions, Automotive Transformation Group maximises sales for retailers, OEMs, financiers and fleet suppliers by making car buying easier for their consumers.



## Finance



### Forza Finance

W: forzafinance.co.uk

T: 01245 245678

**Info:** Benefit from Forza Finance's expertise, choice of products and lenders. Their personal approach will help you achieve higher levels of finance penetration and, ultimately, sell more cars.

## Legal & Compliance

### Lawgistics

W: lawgistics.co.uk

T: 01480 455500

E: sales@lawgistics.co.uk

**Info:** The legal experts for the motor trade, giving advice and support to our industry for over 15 years. Not anti-consumer, just pro-trader.



## Vehicle Photography



### Dealer 360

W: dealer360.co.uk

T: 01270 780855

E: nicky.spratt@ukturntables.com

**Info:** UK makers of photo booths incorporating our turntables for car, van and motorcycle dealers. Our software controls turntable and cameras – a one-stop solution.

## Warranty Providers



### Warrantywise

W: warrantywise.co.uk/dealer

T: 0800 001 4551

E: dealers@warrantywise.co.uk

**Info:** Warrantywise sells over 100,000 warranties per year. Quentin Willson personally designed Warrantywise to be the UK's best used car warranty.

## Data



### Real World Analytics

W: realworldanalytics.com

T: 0808 1890 617

E: auto@realworldanalytics.com

**Info:** We are a SaaS-based data analytics solution provider for multi-site dealers. Our business intelligence tools help customers make faster and better decisions.

## HR & People Management



### HR Manager

W: hrmanager.co.uk

T: 01480 455500

E: info@hrmanager.co.uk

**Info:** HR Manager is Lawgistics' new digital compliance portal designed to assist employers in managing their legal obligations, responsibilities and duties.

## Marketing, PR & Video



### OnCue Communications

W: oncuecomms.com

T: 020 8125 3880

**Info:** We are a leading provider of PR, video and events services to the automotive industry. The PR team has a proven track record of securing high-value, big-impact media coverage.

## Vehicle Tracking



### Meta Trak

W: metatrak.co.uk

T: 020 8867 2340

E: enquiries@metatrak.co.uk

**Info:** Total vehicle security. Clever tracking technology, advanced immobilisation, 24/7 monitoring and an easy-to-use app. Security. Connectivity. Peace of mind.

## Warranty Providers



### WMS

W: wmsgroup.co.uk

T: 01844 293810

E: sales@wmsgroup.co.uk

**Info:** Open 24/7, we offer award-winning warranty products for FCA- and non-FCA-registered dealerships.

## DMS



### DealerDesk

W: dealerdesk.co.uk

E: contact@dealerdesk.co.uk

**Info:** Modernise your stock management, advertising, communication, sales and website. DealerDesk provides you with easy-to-use tools designed to simplify your dealership management.

## Insurance



### Tradesure

W: tradesureinsurance.co.uk

T: 0121 248 9313

**Info:** Providing motor trade insurance to full- and part-time motor traders in the UK, the Tradesure team are reliable professionals who know how to help you.

## Marketing, PR & Video



### Marketing Delivery

W: marketingdelivery.co.uk/

T: 01892 599911

**Info:** Our SocialStock helps target prospects with tailored stock remarketing and social media advertising tools, and automated lead capture for Facebook.

## Warranty Providers



### AutoProtect

W: autoprotect.co.uk

T: 01279 406888

E: sales@autoprotect.net

**Info:** AutoProtect offers a full portfolio of award-winning protection products, including GAP. We lead the market with an 'Excellent' rating on Trustpilot.

## Website Design & Digital Marketing

### Bluesky Interactive

W: blueskyinteractive.co.uk

T: 01926 651000

**Info:** Bluesky Interactive drive dealer websites and digital marketing forward thanks to game-changing innovation, the latest technology and our exceptional relationships with our clients.

## Finance



### Blue Motor Finance

W: blue.co.uk

T: 020 3005 9331

E: dealersupport@blue.co.uk

**Info:** Blue is transforming the car finance market, making car ownership simple and flexible and providing motor traders with access to essential finance.

## Key Control



### Traka

W: traka-automotive.com

T: 0333 355 3726

E: automotive@traka.com

**Info:** Bespoke software and electronic key management cabinets to deliver the most effective solution to dealerships to manage their keys and vehicles.

## Oil & Lubricants



### Mobil™

W: mobil.co.uk

T: 0800 0857 420

**Info:** Whether using Mobil™ or Mobil Super™, Mobil™ engine oils meet or exceed the latest standards of the oil industry and vehicle manufacturers.

## Warranty Providers



### Car Care Plan

W: carcareplan.com

T: 0344 573 8000

**Info:** Car Care Plan is a leading provider of motor protection products, trusted around the world to deliver quality protection with integrity and a customer-oriented outlook.

## Website Design & Digital Marketing

### Haswent

W: haswent.com

T: 020 3920 6164

E: hello@haswent.com

**Info:** Composer is a next-gen automotive platform. You have extensive stock management options, and you'll gain a brilliantly responsive new website.

## Finance



### Close Brothers Motor Finance

W: closemotorfinance.co.uk/

**Info:** Close Brothers Motor Finance are a specialist finance provider, working with over 8,000 dealer partners to offer flexible finance solutions for car, motorcycle and LCV customers.

## Lead Management



### GardX AD-Vantage

W: gardx.co.uk/gardx-ad-vantage

T: 01243 376426

E: goforaspin@gardx.co.uk

**Info:** The award-winning 360 service offers an engaging display of the vehicle while additionally presenting profitable F&I products to a consumer.

## Recruitment



### WeRecruit Auto

W: werecruitauto.co.uk

T: 01603 550041

**Info:** Permanent recruitment – here to assist businesses within the automotive sector find the best fit for their company in terms of skillset, experience and culture.

## Warranty Providers



### Centurion Warranties

W: centurionwarranties.co.uk

T: 0800 368 7420

E: support@cwuk.net

**Info:** Centurion offers comprehensive aftermarket warranty solutions to motor dealers across the UK who sell first-owned vehicles through to high-end, prestige and sports cars.

## Website Design & Digital Marketing

### Spidersnet

W: spidersnet.co.uk

T: 01273 837749

E: hello@spidersnet.co.uk

**Info:** Websites that are designed to increase the number of customers for dealers. We have solutions for all budgets and needs. All solutions include our DMS Autopromotor.

To have your details included email [sales@blackballmedia.co.uk](mailto:sales@blackballmedia.co.uk) and ask for Suppliers Guide listings

## LONG-TERMERS

The CX-60 certainly felt large around the streets of Amsterdam



# MAZDA CX-60

The diesel-powered CX-60 appears to be a sure fit for long-distance driving, but is that the case? **Jon Reay** found out on a recent Amsterdam trip.

After 12,000 miles in the CX-60 so far, you'd think I might have had my fill of long journeys behind its (heated) steering wheel. But given the choice of Eurostar, plane or Mazda to whisk me off to Amsterdam for a few days, strangely enough our big diesel SUV felt like the most natural choice. So on a cold spring morning, we found ourselves boarding the second-ever Eurotunnel journey of the CX-60's life so far.

As I've mentioned before, almost immediately after stepping on to a European motorway, the CX-60 makes itself at home. Mazda has clearly spent some time tuning the car's suspension for the continental tarmac – it feels planted at the 130km/h limit but still perfectly comfortable. Shame we don't live in France, really.

Unfortunately, those nice smooth roads did highlight one foible with our car: the steering. Over the previous few weeks, I'd noticed it started to feel very notchy, almost sticky around the straight-ahead – something that makes it very difficult to drive smoothly in a straight line. This isn't really a problem on our twisty, pot-holed British motorways, but those efficient continental road-builders like to keep their highways as straight as possible – and for me, that meant four hours of fighting an obstinate steering wheel.

Thankfully, leaving the car parked on full lock during a cheeky Belgian McDonald's visit temporarily sorted it, but if you're a fellow CX-60 driver reading this, a proper fix is now available from your local Mazda dealer. Those foibles aside, the Mazda got us from Calais to Amsterdam in record time and in pretty luxuriant comfort too.

If you're like me and hate packing, there's also the added bonus of bringing – if you really want to – the entire kitchen sink with you. The CX-60 comes under a bit of criticism for not being as spacious as it could be, but you'll hear no such arguments from me. Despite my best wardrobe-emptying efforts, there were acres of room still available.

Arriving in the tight, not-at-all-car-friendly city streets of Amsterdam, I'll admit that the CX-60 didn't feel quite so at home. It's a place that's unapologetically designed around bikes – and boats – so ambling around in a two-tonne SUV can feel like walking round Asda in a wedding dress. It's here that our car's optional convenience and driver assistance pack really came into its own. One of my favourite features of our car is the front-facing camera, and nowhere was this more useful than when trying to park next to one of Amsterdam's famous canals rather than in it.

Front cross-traffic alert seems to have been designed for a country such as the Netherlands, too, where at any given moment you need to check for cars, bikes, trams and pedestrians – all at one junction, all at once.

Even though I sold myself this trip as being cheaper than a pair of easyJet flights, I didn't actually expect that to be the case. But despite sitting at mostly 70-80mph – thank you European speed limits – and plenty of stop-start traffic around Antwerp, we managed Calais to Amsterdam and back on one tank of fuel.

That equates to 51mpg without even trying – not far off Mazda's official, lab-tested combined figure of 54. If that's not impressive for a six-cylinder, two-tonne SUV, then I don't know what is.



## THE KNOWLEDGE

### Mazda CX-60 Homura

Price:	<b>£50,705</b>
Powertrain:	<b>3.3-litre diesel</b>
Power:	<b>250bhp</b>
Torque:	<b>550Nm</b>
0-60mph:	<b>7.4 seconds</b>
Top speed:	<b>136mph</b>
Fuel economy:	<b>54.3mpg (WLTP combined)</b>
Emissions:	<b>138g/km CO2</b>
Mileage:	<b>12,380</b>

### This month's highlight:

Finding out that leaving the Mazda parked on full lock while eating a McDonald's temporarily sorted the steering problem!



The variety of cameras proved essential in Amsterdam

## LONG-TERMERS

# AUDI SQ8



A turbocharged V8 engine gave the RS 6 plenty of grunt to get through the snow



**James Baggott** has swapped Audi's iconic RS 6 performance car for an electric SUV from the same brand – here's how he's getting on.

I've been extremely fortunate to run a very-much-petrol-powered Audi RS 6 for the past nine months, but in February that was swapped for an electric SUV – Audi's SQ8 e-tron. Ahead of that, though, was a last hurrah for the RS 6 with a family trip to the Alps for our annual ski holiday. Four up and packed with kit, the RS 6 devoured middle France with aplomb. Complete with top box, it easily swallowed all of the equipment needed and was incredibly comfortable for the entire 13-hour journey to Chamonix.

Audi had swapped the tyres for all-weather winters before the trip and I was glad it did. A huge dump of snow continued for the entire week we were there but the Audi's four-wheel drive and snow tyre combination made it practically unstoppable. The tyres had huge grip and it managed to climb hills that left many other cars stranded at the roadside. It was a wonderful last trip for the RS 6 and made it very hard indeed to hand the keys back.

I prepared for the SQ8's arrival by getting a charger installed and chose PodPoint as the provider as it was recommended by Audi, but I can't say I endorse it. The installation was relatively pain-free, but when I went to use it for the first time it didn't work, with the car blaming the charger and the charger blaming the car.

Following a call to Audi's technicians and the PodPoint customer services team, the latter logged into the charger over wi-fi and made some adjustments. After that, it worked, but I was left baffled as to why something that should have been so simple was so hard.

I must admit, I found the first couple of weeks hard to adjust to the new Audi. It didn't help that it has an awfully annoying speed limit warning 'bong' that sounds even 1mph over the speed limit. Now, I'm not admitting to being a reckless driver here, but I'm sure all of us have accidentally clicked 1mph over the speed limit now and again. What you don't need is a constant alarm telling you you're doing it. Apparently, though, this isn't an Audi thing but a mandated addition to all new cars from 2024 onwards. I've worked out a way to turn it off in the SQ8 – but it's buried deep in the car's digital systems and it has to be switched off every time you get in the car.

I've also been a little shocked by the Audi's range. This is a car that costs, wait for it, £118,105 and most of the time I struggle to get more than 200 miles of range out of a full charge. Theoretically, the car should offer 265 miles, but I've never seen anywhere close to that, and I don't really buy the argument that 'most people don't need to travel further than that', because occasionally I do – and when I do it means battling with the woeful public charging infrastructure. That last point is something most people will desperately want to avoid. There are still too many different apps needed to get them to work, far too many are out of order and when you do get connected they're painfully expensive.

Talking of cost, the Audi isn't really that cheap to run, either. I'm paying between £50-£100 per week on my electric bill to top the car up, which is largely the same amount I was using in fuel for the RS 6. I'm trying to remain positive about life with an electric car because the Audi is actually very nice to drive. It's comfortable, quiet and has some clever tech. I'm still getting used to a lot of it and to the shock (pun intended) of switching to an EV, but at least it'll be an interesting experiment over the next few months.

## THE KNOWLEDGE

### Audi SQ8

Price (as tested):	<b>£118,105</b>
Engine:	<b>Electric motor with 114kW battery</b>
Power:	<b>496bhp</b>
Torque:	<b>973Nm</b>
0-60mph:	<b>4.5 seconds</b>
Top speed:	<b>130mph</b>
Range:	<b>265 miles (claimed)</b>
Emissions:	<b>0g/km CO2</b>
Mileage:	<b>1,346</b>

### This month's highlight:

The chance to drive the RS 6 to Chamonix for its last hurrah before swapping to the SQ8.

## OTHER CARS WE'RE DRIVING



### Genesis GV60

Mileage: **8,184**

With the technology boxes ticked, we're looking forward to seeing what else the GV60 has to offer.



### Nissan Ariya 63kWh Advance

Mileage: **12,205**

Our time with the eye-catching all-electric Ariya has gone without a hitch so far – apart from a puncture, unfortunately!



# Services that make a difference

At Black Horse, we support dealers with expert knowledge and insight, so you can support your customers.

We underpin everything with straightforward tools and systems to simplify the finance journey and help you grow your business.

Find out how we can help you at  
[www.blackhorse.co.uk](http://www.blackhorse.co.uk)

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