



2012/13 imREVIEW

MANGOLETSI

The Knutsford-based dealership adds Subaru to its stable

SHEERNESS

An insight into IM Group's import centre on the Isle of Sheppey

D-MAX

The new Isuzu makes a big impact at special launch event



SUBARU XV
UK

The beginning of a new era of Subaru creative style was launched in Q1 2012, alongside the global strapline of "Confidence in Motion". The "Are you Subaru?" campaign featured an emotional approach, bringing the customers' aspirations and lifestyle to the fore and repositioning our core technology message as a function of the website.



THE NEW XV CROSSOVER

are you subaru?



Rain, sleet, snow, ice, mud, dirt. There are many surfaces where you need All-Wheel Drive grip. And the new Subaru XV's 5 star Euro NCAP safety rating gives you added safety and peace of mind on, and off, road. What's more, XV also has class-leading fuel economy and emissions. To experience the new XV for yourself call in or call us today.



Subaru XV range fuel consumption in mpg [l/100km]: Urban from 32.1 [8.8] to 41.5 [6.8]. Extra urban from 47.9 [5.9] to 56.5 [5.0]. Combined from 40.9 [6.9] to 50.4 [5.6]. CO₂ emissions from 160 to 146 [g/km].

A close-up portrait of Andrew Edmiston, a man with short brown hair and a light beard, wearing a dark suit and white shirt. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is blurred, showing some greenery and light.

IM REVIEW 2012/13 INTRODUCTION

*By Andrew Edmiston
Managing Director - IM Group*

This year has been an extremely challenging one for our company. 2012 has been defined by economic struggles across Europe, with further currency turbulence, economic challenges in the Euro-zone and continued low growth in the UK as it pursues its austerity policies to remedy the growing national debt.

Early on it became clear that increased competition in both the UK and our Nordic markets would put our Subaru performance under pressure given the continued strength of the Japanese yen. In the UK in particular sales have been disappointing and the launch of new products over the coming months will be a welcome boost.

This year has seen the launch of the Great Wall brand into the UK market and this will shortly be followed by launches across our

Nordic markets too. The product has been extremely well received by press, dealers and customers and we are excited about the prospects for this new and important brand.

We are also excited about what has been happening with our other businesses, such as IM Properties, where again the market is presenting numerous challenges but we have been able to continue our growth and performance as planned. The Funding Corporation continues to move forward, building on the strategy laid down in recent years and our Isuzu pickup business in the UK continues to be highly successful.

Compiling the IM Review this year has again been a difficult task. Although the underlying mood of the company is one of grappling with a difficult trading environment, the

creativity and output of our organisation remains undiminished, as you will hopefully see in the following pages.

We still have many opportunities in front of us, something that often goes hand-in-hand with such a tough business environment. And we anticipate being in a good position to make the most of them as they arise.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A Edmiston'.

The headline reads 'Run away from your every day life with the Subaru BRZ.' This advert was used for the promotion of the new Subaru BRZ in Sweden and contains the reminder that the team behind the BRZ are the same people who brought us the Impreza and STi Racing.

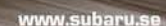
KÖR IFRÅN VARDAGEN
MED NYA SUBARU BRZ



 3 ÅRS FRI SERVICE

Ingredienserna för den optimala körglädjen är Subarus varvvilliga Boxermotor och en extremt låg tyngdpunkt. När du är sugen på att lämna vardagen bakom dig. Långt bakom dig!

Under introduktionsperioden finns BRZ hos utvalda återförsäljare. För att hitta den närmsta, gå in på www.subaru.se



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D-MAX HITS THE SHOWROOMS

Advance marketing initiatives give the new D-Max a head start.

Despite a delayed launch for Isuzu's new D-Max pick-up, IM used the time to advantage by raising awareness of the imminent launch and generating as much interest as possible in the impressive new vehicle. "As a result, through a successful interactive social media campaign, we attracted more than 8,000 expressions of interest," says Isuzu general manager, William Brown.

"So although D-Max didn't go on sale until June, thanks to all the work we did in advance, by the end of September we were already ahead of our sales performance for the same period last year. In a competitive market, with a number of new entrants and some well-established competitors, the D-Max has entered the market and gone straight to the top for retail sales.

"With our competitors looking over their shoulders, I'm confident it will only be a matter of time before we achieve our ambition to be No 1 in the market."



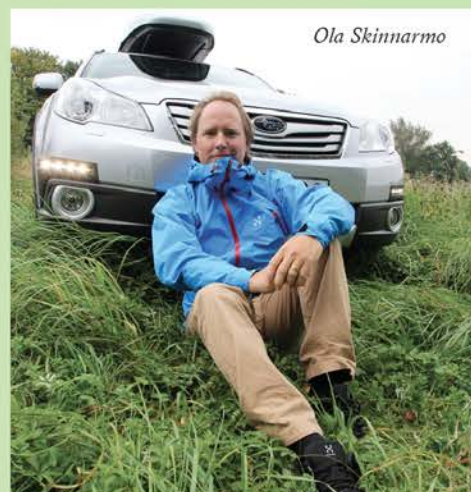
ADVENTURER GOES OUTBACK

One of Sweden's most famous adventurers, Ola Skinnarmo – motto: 'Get through with the least possible environmental impact' – has chosen Subaru's ultra-clean CNG-fuelled Outback as his latest car. Converted in ecology-conscious Sweden, where low-emission vehicles enjoy significant tax benefits, its Boxer engine emits just 25 grams of CO₂ per kilometre.

Nansen, Amundsen and Shackleton, all supported by large teams, achieved notable feats of polar exploration to make them famous. What makes Skinnarmo worthy of a

name among truly great explorers is that he's accomplished all of these feats – but solo and mostly on foot or skis!

Since his first training expedition to Svalbard in 1995, Ola's undertaken a major adventure every two years as well as arranging smaller expeditions in between. "When he puts together his equipment list, quality and reliability are top priority," says Thomas Possling, pan-Nordic PR manager. "If something should go wrong, it should at least not depend on the equipment while the entire adventure should be characterised



Ola Skinnarmo

by respect for the environment. The same thinking as when he bought his newest car..."

FIRST TIME WIN FOR SUBARU XV

Editorial Staff at 4x4 Magazine judged Subaru's new XV compact crossover their SUV of the Year in the publication's annual awards. Editor Nigel Fryatt says the SUV class is one of the most competitive. "The Subaru XV was an interesting new arrival in that class, which did much to impress judges.

"It is such an enjoyable drive, involving the driver in a positive manner. It also boasts promising fuel economy potential. When we

took it off-road, given the obvious limitations of ground clearance, the Subaru completed our test route with ease. But what clinched it for the XV was Subaru's ETCo (Everything Taken Care of) customer service package, which has to be one of the best around."

The XV was placed ahead of key rivals from Audi, Kia, Mazda, Nissan and Volkswagen.



NORDIC'S NEW DIRECTORS

Sales directors appointed for Denmark and Sweden

Subaru Nordic has prepared for increased activity in two key markets – where new models are in the pipeline – by appointing sales directors in Denmark and Sweden.

Niels Thaning started his 29-year automotive industry career with Denmark's Nissan importer. "Subaru stands for quality and has many interesting models in its

programme. Now is the time to raise brand awareness and boost its image," he enthused. "The rest of the Nordic region sees Subaru as a prime player in the premium segment – so I want it to be in Denmark."

Sweden's new sales director is former Fische Marine president, John Hurtig. Before that he was sales manager for Honda's marine division based, for a while, in its European office in London. "Subaru has huge potential with its fresh model programmes," he says. "I feel

a tremendous enthusiasm for this exciting challenge."

Welcoming both to Subaru Nordic, president Torbjörn Lillrud said: "Niels and John both share our vision to be the best Nordic general agent and continue to have the most satisfied car owners."



Niels Thaning



John Hurtig

DAKAR RALLY BECKONS NEW D-MAX

Isuzu dealers and fans in the UK will watch the Dakar Rally in South America in January with particular interest.

The Australia-based Isuzu Motorsports International Off-Road Race Team has built the most spectacular and powerful D-Max pick-up ever to take on what is rated one of the toughest races on earth.

After success in the 2009 event with the last-generation pick-up, when the team was the first diesel to finish, the team has developed the D-Max 3.0-litre 16-valve common-rail turbo diesel engine to produce 242bhp and

589Nm of torque. It is mated to a four-wheel drive system and a sequential five-speed Hollinger gearbox and Xtreme rally clutch. Top speed is 120mph!

To protect the vehicle and its Aussie crew – driver Bruce Garland and co-driver Harry Suzuki – against rock impacts and potential accidents, the chassis features custom-built, full-length 8mm aluminium skid plates, while the steel cab body is fitted with an integrated roll-cage and

carbon-fibre panels that shield the pick-up's key components. "The Isuzu D-Max is the perfect Dakar machine," says Suzuki. "It has the ideal blend of rugged ability and performance and while our D-Max is purpose-built and race-prepared to withstand the punishment of the toughest motorsport event on the calendar, more than half of the vehicle is built using standard Isuzu production parts."



RETIREMENT?

ONLY FOR A FEW HOURS!

Retirement age for youngsters in the UK is rising in stages from 65. But Group After-Sales Director, Roy Marshall, pre-empted the government's move when he retired in July aged 75! And because work is his hobby, the day after he left IM House he was making his way to Coventry Airport where he's involved (full time!) in a new venture running a flight simulator.

Roy spent 32 years with IM having joined in 1980. Before that he had been with Jensen Motors – the company from which IM grew – with the RAF, where he trained motor mechanics, with the Rover

Company and, for a short while, ran his own grocery business. “You could say that work is my hobby,” admitted Roy. “There's not been a lot of time for much else.”

However, he did find time to learn to fly and had, until recently, held a private pilot's licence for 40 years.

Roy says there were many highlights during his career with IM Group. But two stand out. “The first was introducing Hyundai to the UK. The Koreans were not particularly noted for automotive manufacturing at that time and we spent a lot of time

teaching them how to build cars for the European market. The second highlight was helping to start IM's operations in China in 1996. It's interesting to see the launch of Great Wall this year – one of the fruits of the seeds we planted 16 years ago...”

In his new role Roy helps pilots to convert from propeller planes to jets or to brush up on their flight simulator skills as well as granting many more their dream of ‘flying’ a Boeing 737. “Probably 90% of what we do is providing entertainment to people who want to try their hand in a simulator.”



GREAT WALL DEALERS' ROYAL REWARD – ON BRITANNIA!



High-flying Great Wall dealers and their partners took to the water for the first-ever GW dealer

incentive gala dinner in November when they celebrated their sales success in the Queen's State dining

room aboard the Royal Yacht Britannia, moored at Leith near Edinburgh.

The top dealers all met or exceeded the target of eight Steed sales during the campaign period earlier in the year following launch of the first volume-made Chinese vehicle in the UK. Host Paul Hegarty, managing director of Great Wall Motor Distributors UK, was joined by GW regional managers Alastair Kerr, Howard Slade and Stephen Battle as well as Lorraine Jones from the GW sales department and Jennifer O'Dell from IM's customer management centre.

“It was a fantastic occasion and the dealers were really impressed with the venue,” said Paul.

“Guests checked in at Edinburgh's famous Rocco Forte Balmoral Hotel in Princes Street before being taken by luxury coach to be piped aboard the Royal Yacht. After a tour of Britannia we had a five-course dinner, complete with haggis, which was piped in and addressed in the traditional way. Some of our multi-franchise dealers had been on some spectacular incentive trips with other companies, but all said they were bowled over by the first-ever Great Wall gala dinner.”

IM'S 'REMARKABLY GENEROUS' DEALERS



Sixteen Subaru dealers and their partners became angels of mercy when they visited an orphanage on the last day of their one-week October incentive trip to Vietnam and Cambodia. "When we arrived at the orphanage it was clear that everyone there was very sad," explained Darren James, managing director of Subaru UK. "They'd been told by their Cambodian landlord that unless they paid US \$18,000 by the end of December, they'd be evicted from the land putting the 44 kids back on the streets..."

"They had no hope of raising that sum. Everyone in our party was so emotional. Yet in the space of 15 minutes the dealers had dipped into their pockets and collected more than \$18,000 – about £12,000, in fact. It was a

remarkable act of generosity and, for the first time in my life, I was lost for words."

The children – and their carers – were thrilled, and the link forged with the orphanage is continuing. "We're collecting things like children's clothes and reading and writing materials to send out to them," said Darren.

The plight of the children – and their joy when they knew they'd been saved from eviction – was just one of many memories the dealers brought home. Another was gaining their motorcycle licences in Vietnam where they sampled the Top Gear experience. In 2008, the TV show's presenters, Jeremy Clarkson, Richard Hammond and James May, rode 1,000 miles from Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City) to Ha Long near Hanoi.

GREAT WALL FITNESS 'WALK' BY IM STAFF

To celebrate the launch of Great Wall Motor's Steed and to kick-off a fitness campaign, teams of IM staff at three locations have 'walked' the Great Wall of China – all 3,889 miles of it!

Organiser Faye Nash, PA to managing director, Andrew Edmiston, said the competition had promoted great fun among staff as well as focussing attention on the benefits of exercise and keeping fit. "Companies have a responsibility for employees' welfare and it was interesting to see how this fun competition really took

off among head-office staff at IM House in Coleshill, at our Ryder Street parts and service division in West Bromwich and at our import centre at Sheerness in Kent.

"It was calculated that 8,369,760 steps are needed to cover the full length of the Great Wall. Randomly-selected teams were placed in two leagues – six teams of 22 people in League 1 at Coleshill and four teams of 10 people each at Ryder Street and Sheerness in League 2. Everyone was provided with a pedometer and I recorded the steps they

covered each week."

The winning team in each league – 'Lost in Pace' in League 1 who took seven weeks to cover the distance, and 'Great Wall Walkers' in League 2 who took 12 weeks – were treated to a healthy Chinese meal courtesy of Andrew Edmiston.

"Staff took the exercising really seriously," added Faye. "At lunch times you could see groups of people marching up and down the long drive to IM House!"



MANGOLETSI

ADDS SUBARU



Knutsford-based Mangoletsi, Britain's longest-established, largest and most successful Alfa Romeo dealership, added Subaru to its stable in May. Owner and managing director, Fraser Hudson, told Keith Read how the union – already proving successful for Mangoletsi and IM Group – came about.



Three years ago, Mangoletsi invested £1 million in an eight-month redevelopment of its premises located on a prime site adjacent to the A50 in Cheshire, an area of the country rated second only in wealth to London's borough of Kensington. The result is a magnificent showroom with a large parts department, 15-bay workshop and an MoT bay. "Clearly we have a lot of capacity here," says Fraser who, as an enthusiastic 20-year-old Rolls-Royce and Ferrari salesman working for Stratstone, joined the company in 1985.

"In one half of the showroom I can display 10 Alfa Romeos while in the other half I can display the whole Subaru range. Not many dealers are able to do that. We have just purchased a large piece of land for development next to the dealership. It will more than double our frontage, improve visibility of the dealership and add an extra 27 parking spaces – something our customers will really appreciate."

While Fraser was building his new premises, the area's former Subaru dealership - just six miles away – had changed hands and would,

within a short while, no longer represent Subaru. It had been Subaru for 20 years and held a good reputation with an extensive client base. Here was an opportunity for Mangoletsi... However, Fraser had by no means focused on Subaru at this stage. That came only after a trip to the 2011 Frankfurt Motor Show to size-up all the makes he had on his list for a potential addition to Mangoletsi, which he purchased in 1995 having bought shares in the company just before he was appointed managing director – aged just 25 – in 1990.

"I'd looked at the synergies," he explained. "Attention to detail is what we do. We deliver excellent customer service – exactly what Subaru customers are looking for."

An example of his customer-focus came on day one of the new franchise. "When we got all the cars in the showroom and all the demonstrators lined up, we worked hard to let everyone know that we were the new Subaru dealer for the area. We had a lot of help from IM. Their marketing is very good and it's something we're good at too. When each Subaru customer came into the

business – whether it was for parts, for service or to buy a new or used car – my general manager, Simon Taylor, or I would meet those customers. The purpose of that was to understand the make-up and motivation of the Subaru customer and the buttons that need to be pushed to get the right rapport with him or her."

Fraser says that the exercise illustrated that Subaru customers are quite different to Alfa Romeo customers. "Both are keen on customer service, but a Subaru customer is very considered in his purchase, very interested in the vehicle's technical specs, running costs and all of those things. They know the brand very well and have usually had multiple vehicles."

So what had convinced Fraser that when IM knocked on his door offering Subaru, he should say yes?

"When we decided we were going to go for another brand and use our facilities for something else, I looked at my customer database which has 22,000 active customer records. If those customers wanted to buy a Great Dane, they could not buy a car from Mangoletsi that

It's so important that we offer excellent service wherever that customer enters our business, be it via the website, the telephone or by just walking in.

accommodated such a large dog. If they wanted to go shooting with a 4x4 or buy a new coupé, they could not buy a car from Mangoletsi. But with Subaru as one of our franchises they can buy an Outback, Forester or BRZ...

"I was interested in the complementary nature of Subaru models. We are located in the countryside and there is a lot of fishing and shooting that goes on. I could see that Subaru made sense. At the Frankfurt Show I was impressed with the Subaru XV. What's key to any brand is new models, and Subaru had three new models coming along."

Fraser says IM was delighted there was someone really close to their former dealership who had the capacity to take on Subaru – hence the approach.

He views the future with Subaru as long-term and bright with the Mangoletsi business model ideally suited to the brand. "Customers enter the business from multiple directions, so a parts customer becomes a service customer becomes a sales customer... It's so important that we offer excellent service wherever that customer enters our business, be it via the website, the telephone or by just walking in. Keeping in contact with those customers is very important. Howard Ormesher (IM Group's director of CRM) does a very good job on the database management with Subaru. Keeping in contact with those customers who are not rushing to make up their minds is very important."

Fraser also sees potential to develop the established Mangoletsi performance and bespoke modification brand, Modifica. "Subaru customers like to customise their cars, so there's a complete synergy there too." Always open to opportunities, Fraser says if it's a good plan, he'll do it. "We're very dynamic and very, very light on our toes."

Evidence of just how such opportunities can benefit both parties came when Subaru wanted to experiment with pricing on the WRX STi. "They decided that because we're quite good at marketing, they'd give it a try with us. So we went to market, had some success with those cars, and the next thing to happen was that Subaru ran it as a national campaign. So

Fraser Hudson



it's handy for them to be able to plug in to the expertise that we're able to offer."

Mangoletsi was established 45 years ago by the Mangoletsi family although they were forced to sell it within a year to business partners Alan Edge and Brian Moffat who, at that time, owned and ran a boat building-business in Chichester. They had been involved with the Mangoletsi family tuning their marine engines for some years. In 1968 the partners made one of their most crucial business decisions, agreeing to take on the Alfa Romeo franchise – an unknown entity in the UK. But thanks to Edge and Moffat – and, later, Fraser – Mangoletsi helped put the Italian brand on the UK map. They took on Fiat in the mid 1990s.

Today, the company turns over £28 million a year – three times the average, says Fraser. "We pride ourselves on knowing the products inside out, so the in-depth knowledge of our staff is incredibly important. My after-sales manager, Ken Buckley, has been with the company for 44 years, my senior deputy parts manager, Roy Jeffries, for 40 years and my service manager for 15 years. Our mantra for success is simple: deliver on the promise and do what you say you're going to do."

RISING TO THE CHALLENGE

WHEN HAYDN DAVIES
JOINED IM GROUP
AS UK MARKETING
DIRECTOR IN JUNE
HE WAS BY NO MEANS
THE NEW BOY AT IM
HOUSE.

For his extensive knowledge of the domestic pick-up truck and 4x4 markets had been employed by Isuzu during 2011 when he was engaged on a short-term contract to support the important launch of the new D-Max range.

And with his entire career seemingly adding expertise that he can use to good effect in his

new role, it's perhaps not surprising that after his time helping Isuzu he was invited to join the Group's management team. However, Haydn admits that he didn't accept the initial approach as he was running his own business at the time. But the power of the magnet that is all that's happening within IM proved more than strong enough to attract him.

"There are so many challenges with Isuzu's new D-Max and new models from Subaru and Great Wall, not to mention new brands that IM could bring in," he said. "And when I thought about the potential, it wasn't such a difficult decision!"

Haydn's career started in Surrey with a BMW and Datsun (now Nissan) dealership followed by a move to the Midlands to open and run his own bodyshop. Having sold that business, he spent 10 years with Partco Autoparts where he managed the refinish, garage equipment and commercial vehicle component divisions. He left Partco to join

Stanley Europe – part of a group best-known for its hand tools – as European marketing manager for its automotive division.

His next move was to Mitsubishi Motors – initially in after-sales marketing and then as general manager of marketing – where he became intimately familiar with the L200, the model that was to become one of the most popular pick-up trucks in the face of stiff and growing competition. "We faced many challenges," says Haydn. "But history shows how well we did with that vehicle."

Clearly the experience and knowledge gained during those days remains an asset that he brings to IM with its Isuzu D-Max and Great Wall Steed pick-ups and, of course, the all-wheel-drive Subaru line-up. Couple that with his passion for countryside sports – hunting and shooting – and the expertise he gained while involved in that industry, and Haydn appears tailor-made for IM's products and customers, many of whom enjoy outdoor pursuits.



Already his former links with Realtree, the US-based creator and marketer of the world's most versatile camouflage patterns, have helped to promote Great Wall's Steed. And his

...“AND WHEN I THOUGHT ABOUT THE POTENTIAL, IT WASN'T SUCH A DIFFICULT DECISION!”

association with the world of hunting has seen D-Max featured in game and wild food chef Mike Robinson's TV programmes.

Haydn's links with Realtree saw him in the role of the company's international marketing director. His understanding of the intricate world of camouflage – Realtree has designed unique patterns for all hunting environments,

all of which are registered and licensed to different manufacturers – has given Steed a dramatic appearance during its launch. Interestingly, while camouflage can hide people, vehicles and almost anything appropriately covered, it can also make objects stand out in a crowd. Just how effective this can be is illustrated on p41 where the reaction to a very special camouflaged Steed by former model, Jordan (Katie Price) is described.

Haydn sees the challenge of marketing the Great Wall models that will follow Steed as attracting urban and city drivers, and breaking down any pre-conceived prejudice against Chinese engineering that Western motorists might have. “We have a job to do on engineering, trust and confidence in the brand. The early signs are that we can overcome any prejudice. New products in the pipeline – such as the H6 SUV – are very exciting. In five to eight years' time there's a lot of potential for us to be bringing in a full Great Wall model line up.

“For Subaru we already have the XV and BRZ and there's a new Forester, along with a facelift Outback with all new Lineartronic CVT, scheduled for 2013.

“Isuzu's product is fantastic. The new D-Max is one of the best pick-ups on the market – a market-leading pick-up. The price is right and we're aiming at the construction industry and fleet business as well as maintaining our presence in our traditional markets of farming and rural pursuits. I believe it can become No 1 in the UK pick-up market. The future is very exciting for Isuzu.”

What Haydn can't talk about in detail is the next new brand that IM will bring to the UK. Negotiations are at an advanced stage to import another complementary marque with huge appeal. “All I can say is watch this space and read about another success for us...”

BRZ

LAUNCH

WHAT THE MEDIA SAID...

AUTO EXPRESS
17TH OCTOBER 2012
JAMES DISDALE &
DEAN GIBSON

"Subaru is famous for two things: turbos and four-wheel-drive. So the brand's faithful followers were shocked to learn that its latest sports car – the BRZ – features neither of those traditional selling points. Instead, this 2+2 coupé attempts to go back to basics and deliver what Subaru calls 'pure handling delight' through a lightweight rear-wheel-drive chassis powered by a high-revving, naturally aspirated 2.0-litre engine."

"Deep door pockets and a wide storage tray in the centre console mean that any loose items are easily secured. The 243-litre boot is just about spacious enough to carry a pair of suitcases, and with the rear seats folded down flat, this compact coupé can swallow a very impressive 1,270 litres of luggage. This surprising amount of flexibility has done nothing to blunt the BRZ's handling, though. Subaru's engineers have spent years honing the design to achieve near-perfect 53:47 front-to-rear weight distribution, and the 2.0-litre boxer engine is mounted as low down as possible in the chassis to ensure the BRZ stays planted to the road in corners."





"Dear Car Clinic, I have £25k to spend on something fun to drive and semi-practical, and am tempted by the Toyota GT86 or the Subaru BRZ. My only problem is which to go for?"

Yours,
Ian Madely, Windsor."

"Jeremy Clarkson said he'd buy the Subaru BRZ just so he didn't have to say he owned a Toyota. But while the GT86 comes with a five-year,

100k-mile warranty versus the Subaru's three-year, 60k-miler, the Scooby also comes with Subaru's ETCo (Everything Taken Care of) package, free of charge. Minor dents/scratches, alloy wheel repairs, monthly

valet, service collection and delivery, first MoT test and a load of other things are all covered – potentially saving you several grand. Enough to sway us... "



"... it does have one of Subaru's inimitable throbbing boxer engines under the bonnet. It's an engine with a massive influence over the motive character of the BRZ. Its size, shape, location and output – even the way it produces its power – all make telling contributions

to a dynamic repertoire that, as we we'll go on to explain, makes this car as distinctive as it is intoxicatingly effective on the road."

"The front seats are comfortable enough for touring yet supportive enough for hard driving, and its seating position is spot on."

"This is a sports car first and a fast car second – which is so refreshing to report. While BRZ's limits themselves are impressive, it's more the breadth and habitability of the margins of its handling that end up holding your imagination hostage. You don't need to goad this

Subaru. Just drive it with the same smooth composure that characterises the car so vividly, and the BRZ responds. And once you're on terms with it, the car becomes a playful, subtle and totally beguiling thing that you can't help falling for."



"It shouldn't be a surprise to anyone that the BRZ is a cracking car – Subaru have a reputation for delivering mainstream performance cars such as the iconic Impreza WRX STi. But the current WRX now starts at a steep £32,995, which is where the BRZ come in. With prices starting at £24,995, it's a

more affordable, sporty proposition. It may lack the supercar performance of the WRX STi, but it's big on entertainment value. The 0-62mph figure may look ordinary at 7.6 seconds, as does the 143mph top speed. But it feels a lot faster. And you will like the fuel economy figure of 40mpg. The BRZ

also sounds the business..."

"But the trump card is the fantastic road holding – and given conditions when I was testing it, I found it's one of those rare cars that handles just as well in the wet, sticking to the road like glue. The steering is pin-sharp and instantly responsive but, unlike some performance cars,

never twitchy. It's a car that feels reassuringly planted the faster you go."

"The BRZ is a coupé for enthusiasts who love driving. It's a back-to-basics sports car that is affordable and exclusive, which should see Subaru with a waiting list for one of the unheralded motoring stars of 2012."



"It sounds like so much hyperbole but the Porsche Cayman is its closest competitor in terms of its ability to deliver rich feedback and flow down a road quite so well. The £25,000 asking price includes features such as

17in alloy wheels, a torque-sensing LSD, front, side, curtain and knee airbags, MP3 connectivity, dual-zone climate control and LED daytime running lights."

"Subaru is committed to doing what it can to make

the ownership experience as painless as possible. Its innovative ETCo (Everything Taken Care of) package is like no other after-sales service around."

REVIEW

of the year

2012

The beginning of 2012 was very different to the end. The year saw an amazing number of changes for IM Group.

At the outset there was a lot of focus on Subaru, in both our Nordic and UK markets, with the launch of the XV. The new car was received well by dealers and press. However, strong yen prices yielding low margins meant that promoting the new arrival was a more than difficult task.

Nevertheless, it quickly became the best seller in both Nordic and the UK markets.

If every cloud has a silver lining, does the principle work the other way around? Strong

sales of XV presented a few issues for our markets, for different reasons.

In the UK sales for other Subaru products fell with the introduction of the new model and marketing costs overall were higher because of the XV launch. The UK market has seen increased discounting, much of it quiet – low-rate finance, low-cost lease/rental deals. This has further complicated the year. The net effect is that 2012 has been a loss-making year for Subaru UK, leaving us with the task of restructuring the business so that we can grow in the future.

For 2013 a number of important new Subaru products will arrive and the big success story of

2012 for the brand – the BRZ sports car – will be supplied in better quantities. Subaru's core technology remains unique. New products are the lifeblood of any brand because they maintain the interest of loyal customers, of which we have many. These new products will be important as we seek to improve the fortunes of Subaru in the UK over the coming years.

As the year closed, both IM and Fuji Heavy Industries, the makers of Subaru, met to discuss how to further bolster the UK market. The results were positive for both sides with a renewed commitment to the task and a plan emerging that should allow these important new

Our strategy is to make sure that we not only offer value-for-money motoring but also understand that this is something that is not delivered by the product alone.

BY ANDREW EDMISTON

products to be launched with success.

The most important thing about Subaru is that it still has a reason to exist in the market, whereas a number of competitor brands are beginning to struggle with this point. They are finding themselves squeezed by improving Korean product at the bottom end and by more-affordable premium brands at the top end. In fact, there is a blur beginning to happen right across the various market sectors.

Subaru Nordic had its own issues too. The end of 2011 saw the arrival of the new Legacy and Outback CNG cars. This gave us the opportunity to move into the fleet sector because

of the all important 'environmentally friendly' car tax rules.


Whenever you enter a new market the costs tend to be higher and the early demand difficult to predict. This, plus the launch of the XV, has made for a different year to the last few we have experienced in the Nordic territory and our profits have been significantly reduced in 2012.

Rarely does anything worthwhile come without effort though. Having been through the first year with both XV and the CNG products, next year looks like it could be an extremely good one for Subaru Nordic. At the end of 2012 demand for the CNG cars was building well and

stock problems encountered during the first part of the year had been dealt with.

The big news for 2013 is the arrival of some new Subaru products that will be absolutely key in the Nordic markets. The work we have accomplished over the last few years in building a solid and good market share, plus the continued development of a skilled and motivated dealer network, bodes very well for the forthcoming years.

Our confidence remains extremely high and the move to our new head offices, near Malmö, cannot come soon enough because we are bursting at the seams in our present location.



With Great Wall in 2012, and the potential of another brand in 2013, this could become like buses – you wait for ages and then two arrive together!

When we look back on 2012, I suspect we will remember it mostly for one thing - the launch of the first Chinese brand in the UK market. This happened in April time and by the end of the year we had reached over 500 sales of the Steed pickup.

More importantly, the product and brand have been well received by journalists, dealers and customers and can look forward to a bright future. The next product from Great Wall will be the H6 mid size SUV that should hit the UK market during 2013. IM Nordic will also launch the Great Wall brand during 2013.

Our strategy is to make sure that we not only offer value-for-money motoring but also understand that this is something that is not

delivered by the product alone. Our dealers in the UK have been selected on their ability to deliver a high level of customer service in a natural and friendly way. We have tried to construct a very simple franchise philosophy for Great Wall dealers so that they are free to concentrate on giving better attention to customers – something they were keen to do anyway.

We will continue with this theme as we launch the H6 into a fairly busy and competitive sector. There is no doubt that there are some very capable competitors in this market. But the H6's blend of casual style, quality, low running costs and value will make it a great proposition for customers.

Looking further forward, there will be H2 and

Looking forward to 2013 there is every reason to expect we will have an extremely busy and profitable year.

H4, as well as the H6 model, arriving between 2013 and 2015. Added to the Steed, this will give a good range of SUV and pickup products that will make up the Great Wall offering. Our dealers and customers can look forward to Great Wall rewriting the rules somewhat over the coming years and we certainly intend to give our competitors a lot to think about!

With the hardest part now behind us we believe that 2012 has set us up for a great deal of success over the coming years with Great Wall.

Of course, none of this would have happened without our team in Business Development and especially the dedication and commitment of our Beijing office staff.

This year has seen further growth in our VCA work in China and there seems to be significant opportunity for still further growth over the coming years. Both VCA and IM are delighted with the success this collaboration has brought.

As the year closed another franchise opportunity was being seriously considered by our senior management. Before 2012, the last major franchise to be launched was SsangYong in 1995 (this was also an IM launch although for some complicated reasons, mainly to do with the takeover of SsangYong by the now-defunct Daewoo Cars, we no longer have the SsangYong franchise). With Great Wall in 2012, and the potential of another brand in 2013, this could become like buses – you wait for ages and then two arrive together!

In fact, the next few years could see a big increase in the number of new manufacturers looking to enter the European market compared with the last decade or so. Having committed more investment than anyone else in this area, IM is well positioned to take advantage. We are already discussing ways of making these introductions even more efficient than we have achieved with Great Wall's launch and to amplify the influence of IM even further. There must be opportunities to bring further customer and dealer benefits from the increase in number of franchises we represent, so that those franchises offer a better all-round proposition than our competitors and IM can offer more added value

to manufacturers than ever before.

The key to achieving this, and indeed to further improving our existing businesses, is to find new ways of doing things that both drive down cost and, at the same time, improve effectiveness – with customer satisfaction and profit for us and our dealers being the ultimate goal. At the end of 2012, and in part-response to the difficulties we experienced in the early part of the year, we began the process of a thorough review of our various internal departments.

We restructured UK operations so that one senior management team was given the task of managing the various franchises with dedicated 'general managers' giving franchise focus to our field forces. The idea is to ensure that we can remove competition within our brands, allowing us to take decisions that fully benefit all of them, and our group. Rather than be tied to different ways of doing things, we can select the best and apply that to all our operations (so long as that suits each particular brand).

We believe there are some key changes happening within the market and that we need to further improve our ability to respond to those changes by changing ourselves. This process is here to stay and the message to our staff in the 'speakeasy' communication in October was to not be surprised when changes become necessary. The speed with which we can make changes is going to be one of the ways we will compete.

Maintaining this ability to be flexible depends a lot on knowing and understanding what is happening in the world around us. Nowhere is this more important than within IM Properties.

Over the years we have built up a good reputation in the property market. We don't flatter people with unrealistic offers. But we are fair and straightforward – and also extremely experienced. We have a reputation of doing exactly what we say we will do. This reputation has been hard fought in achieving and we will not move from it. When people do business with us they know exactly where they stand – this is not an undeserved reputation.

In making it easier for others to do business with us, we also make our business a better

business. We are finding that there are plenty of opportunities to make sensible investments and make a proper return for our efforts.

Our site at Dordon remains of great interest to customers and has always been particularly well located for large-scale distribution. Other markets, such as the USA, have been working out well for us too. The ongoing work we are doing with Roundy's Supermarkets is proving to be beneficial for both parties and there is opportunity for us to increase further what we are doing. We now have a very large portfolio of property in the UK, Europe and the USA. This brings with it certain risks, but these we manage very carefully and with some preference for caution.

The team at IMP, as well as IM Group staff, work hard to make sure that we are fully supported by our banks and funders. Even though we remain extremely stable and with a well managed cashflow, this is something that can never be taken for granted.

Looking forward to 2013 there is every reason to expect we will have an extremely busy and profitable year.

One of the staff members who has been well known to our banks is Andrew Naylor. During the year Andrew had a serious cycling accident. This affected all staff in our company since Andrew is a well-known and well-liked individual. It goes without saying that our best wishes have been and are with him as he continues his recovery. In reviewing 2012 this is something that cannot be left out, not just because of Andrew but because of the way the company – and particularly those people who worked closely with him – rallied around and supported him. Business is why we work at IM, but we are people first and foremost and it has been great to see that our company means more than just an income. It is about help, support and friendship, in life as well as work.

Something that is working very well is our Isuzu franchise in the UK. We started the year being supply restricted due to the run out of the old model, the introduction of the new D-Max and also the flooding in Thailand at the end of 2011. This severely impacted production. But even worse than that, it was a terrible catastrophe for the whole country. We were able to see first hand, with Isuzu UK dealers, the devastation since we had a pre-planned trip to meet our Isuzu colleagues in Thailand at the end of 2011.

Despite these troubles, the factory resumed production quickly and began working to reduce the backlog. In May we were able to launch the new vehicle with sales beginning in earnest at the half-year. It looks like we will sell over 2,500 new D-Max in the first six months of trading.

As a company we have become important players in the pickup market with two brands in the sector. Our ambitions for the Isuzu D-Max are to become the market leader within the life of this current vehicle and we have seen nothing to persuade us that it is not possible.

Our launch event was held in Cirencester at Cotswold Airport. It was an unusual venue but one that worked well for us. We were able to host dealers, journalists, fleet managers and our own staff in what turned out to be a unique and perfectly-suitable setting.

As you often hear in the motor industry, "the car is the star" – and so it proved! In a nearby quarry – re-worked to make a formidable off-road course, even for those familiar with off-road courses – the D-Max showed us all how to drive off-road! Plunging down ravines that seemed implausible, the proper technique is to take your feet off the pedals and let the car do the work. All you have to do is steer!

This type of driving would be familiar to people with various products equipped to venture off the beaten track. But what really set the D-Max apart was the ease with which it

The future won't be easy, none of us expects it to be. But there are many things we can do to take hold of the opportunities that are still with us and in front of us.

coped with things that other vehicles couldn't. At the same time both confidence and awe inspiring, visitors left in no doubt that it was not driving skill that got them around that course, but engineering skill...

The same was true going uphill, and across. There must be very few cars in production that could cope with what we threw at the new D-Max.

To prove our confidence, we had all our competitors' vehicles present at the event. Dealers, journalists and other visitors were able to see exactly how our car performed – no gimmicks, just the truth.

For next year we believe that the strength of our product, plus the ability of 100 dedicated and motivated dealers, gives us a great chance to make advances in market share. The only inhibitor could be getting enough stock because there are backorders in Thailand (the home

market) and the car has been well received all over the world.

Other areas of our business, such as The Funding Corporation, IM Parts and Service plus our Sheerness Operations, continued to build on those strategies laid down over previous years. The Funding Corporation will again be profitable and we are continually improving the service we are offering to customers – a key feature of our approach. Following a difficult period some years ago, this is turning into a solid, reliable and great business.

Our Sheerness team had to cope with some interesting challenges this year. Having over a thousand Isuzu D-Max land mid-year, with 100 dealers desperate to get cars to supply to customers who had placed earlier orders, on top of the requirements of our other businesses proved to be difficult. Mission Impossible?

Not for our crew! What are weekends for in busy times if not for working?

Their commitment is well worth noting, as is the commitment of all our staff. From Northern Europe to the far West of Europe, from the Baltic states to China, we are served by some great people... And although 2012 turned out to be a tough and challenging year, as ever our staff helped us all through. I am deeply grateful for that.

The future won't be easy, none of us expects it to be. But there are many things we can do to take hold of the opportunities that are still with us and in front of us. The message from 2012 is that with a balanced portfolio, including property, finance and cars, we can face the future with confidence if we are prepared to embrace the way it will change us.

CRM

a year on

HOWARD ORMESHER TALKS ABOUT THE CONTINUED BENEFITS OF CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

It's been a year since IM Group moved its CMC (customer management centre) operations in-house from an external marketing agency to save costs, improve efficiency and move IM closer to its dealer partners and customers. A year in which much has been learned, even more has been achieved and, most importantly with intense economic pressure on all businesses, continuing growing influence on franchised sales by the CMC.

For Howard Ormesher, group director of CRM (customer relationship management) it's been a year of continuous assessment, adjustment and fine-tuning to ensure the change brought the predicted benefits. He also admits to having to cope with some frustrations along the way, further indication of the pressures faced by companies – particularly those in the automotive sector – during the current difficult market conditions.

But the many high-spots have more than

compensated. "There's no doubt that following the change in January, we have experienced some huge benefits. We're closer to our dealers and we're closer to our customers," he says.

Because IM Group doesn't sell to customers, with the exception of the after-sales department, it has no channel to communicate with customers and misses out on important feedback from buyers of the vehicles it imports. "To move from being an administration organisation to having a sales team, we needed to embrace sales culture," explains Howard. "The CMC team is beginning to give us that culture."

Incentives are the key to motivate and reward the CMC agents, in-house or external. Commission payments are made based on the number of calls made, the number of test drives taken and the customer satisfaction score. Under the leadership of manager Claire Ketchion, previously a regional manager for Subaru and Daihatsu, the team of four

has shown impressive results against some challenging targets.

"For Q3 I set a really stretching target of raising the number of test-drives by 120%. We actually achieved a 400% increase in confirmed test drives – a great result! Not only that, the CSI score improved!" The reason for the surge, explains Howard, was down to more test-drive being reported by dealers. Using her long-standing excellent relationship with dealers, Claire persuaded them to update the information on IM's Contact Tracker system. To put this in perspective, in 2011 dealers made 10,000 entries. Yet in the first nine months of 2012, thanks to Claire, 20,000 entries were made. "That made us much more efficient as we have not had to spend time chasing up dealers for test drives," added Howard.

The inevitable effect of increased efficiency, coupled with the flurry of activity that coincides with vehicle registration plate changes twice



“FOR Q3 I SET A REALLY STRETCHING TARGET OF RAISING THE NUMBER OF TEST-DRIVES BY 120%. WE ACTUALLY ACHIEVED A 400% INCREASE IN CONFIRMED TEST DRIVES – A GREAT RESULT!”

a year in the UK, has meant significant peaks for the ultra-lean CMC team. “We needed a strategy to cope with the peaks,” says Howard. “We could have brought in an external agency. However, we decided to put out a call to IM

House staff interested in being trained to become part-time CMC team members – working after their normal hours for additional remuneration. We pointed out that it would be helpful if potential candidates had an enthusiasm for our products. Being technical would also be an advantage, although not essential, while telephone-sales techniques were not seen as a prerequisite as we would provide training.”

The Lord Kitchener-style ‘Your-Company-Needs-You’ appeal brought forward several enthusiastic volunteers, including a very senior person from the accounts department. “All are passionate about the products and four happen to work in a technical role,” says a delighted Howard. “And all were ready to be trained for CMC work.”

With the volunteers working to accommodate peaks in activity from 4pm until 7pm on weekdays and from 10am until 2pm on Saturdays, the team of telephone callers has the potential to

almost treble in size. And with the conversion rate from contact by phone of around 5% – compared to 1% from direct mail – the results of their work is likely to continue to be impressive.

Howard describes it as “...turning our analytical CRM capability into operational CRM and, by way of example, we are about to test outbound calling to contacts from the CRM system who have either been browsing our websites or have told us online when they plan to change their vehicle. This is a great move forward in our CRM journey. Having the CMC in-house is a huge advantage to us, with all the efficiency, performance and financial benefits it brings, not only to the Group’s existing brands, but also to the newly-acquired Great Wall – and any future franchises.”



D-Max

HAS
LANDED

IT'S A BIG PULL



After the initial launch we look for a follow-up to launch D-Max in the dealerships. We wanted something that would help to communicate its toughness and durability. Knowing that our customers are all no-nonsense types – but are up for a laugh when relaxing – meant some innovative thinking.

We came up with The Big Pull – quite simply a rope with a strain gauge attached

to a parked D-Max. Each contestant had to use all their muscle power to pull it along. The person moving the needle the furthest was the winner. To test the idea, Isuzu general manager, William Brown and I tested it on customers at Peter Eakins' garage in Northern Ireland.

Whilst the good folk of Claudy were a little shy to start, once a couple had tried it, there was a queue all evening. Even the local children took part – and put William and me to shame. Kids of D-Max customers are made of tough stuff too!

The Big Pull concept was immediately rolled out nationally. Saturday 14th July designated Big Pull Day with all 90 Isuzu dealers running an event with the competition at its heart. For the majority it proved a winner and certainly something different for a dealer promotion – a big pull in fact in more ways than one!

Paul Tunncliffe, director - UK Operations, reports on how the new Isuzu D-Max makes a big impact at special launch event.

New pick-ups do not come around every year. So when the new D-Max was announced we knew we'd have to make a big splash. But when we saw it, we knew immediately that it was a game-changer and our launch plans had to change from 'big splash' to 'major spectacular'. We needed to convince everyone that this pick-up would propel us to the coveted No 1 slot in the UK...

The main audiences we had to persuade were dealers, press and fleet buyers. The first two are, perhaps, predictable. However, we'd never had any presence in the fleet sector. But

we clearly saw that we could do something about that with D-Max. To create the impact this launch justified we needed a venue that would make clear our ambition – something that shouted that this was not simply business as usual. We wanted an environment that reflected the life of a working pick-up.

We chose the Cotswold Airport. Not only is it used for recreational and commercial flying, but also for dismantling large passenger jets. It's a tough, working environment. And for an off-road course a nearby quarry offered a landscape that few of our customers would ever attempt in



*We really enthused our dealers,
and subsequent sales results have
proved they share our vision of
becoming No 1.*

their trucks, but which we knew would show off D-Max capabilities – to the max!

'D-Max has landed' was the theme chosen and we dressed the 20 professional drivers in flying suits, with Aviator glasses for that authentic Top-Gun look! With a raft of vehicles that some saw as competitors, it was game on!

I knew the launch was destined to be a success when I arrived on day one. The sun was shining; the airport had lent us two 747 Jumbo Jets as a backdrop and the first dealers had arrived early.

Their jaws dropped when they saw what we'd laid on for them. Mission accomplished, I thought – and we hadn't even started.

The day set the scene for the entire week. The weather behaved impeccably, the dealers fully played their part and the vehicles showed themselves off perfectly. Never have I heard such enthusiasm for a launch. We really enthused our dealers, and subsequent sales results have proved they share our vision of becoming No 1. Motoring journalists and key

fleet buyers also recognise just what a contender for market-leadership the new D-Max is.

Any downsides? Only if you work for Mitsubishi. Cotswold Airport is only minutes away from their head office and staff drove past en-route to work every day. Still, they might as well get used to playing second-best to Isuzu...



D-MAX IS GAME FOR MIKE ROBINSON

Isuzu Pick-Ups are used by a variety of professionals – farmers, builders, forestry workers and TV chefs. TV Chefs? Yes, really! Chef Mike Robinson, of ITV's Countrywise Cooking, is a fanatical Isuzu owner. His truck regularly appears when he cooks game from its load bay.

Needless to say he is now the proud owner of a new D-Max Utah, specially modified to allow him to hunt the game that he serves in his restaurants. Mike appreciates the go-anywhere capability of the car, especially when he's hunting deer in remote countryside late at night. He's even installed a winch to help him load the carcasses single-handed.

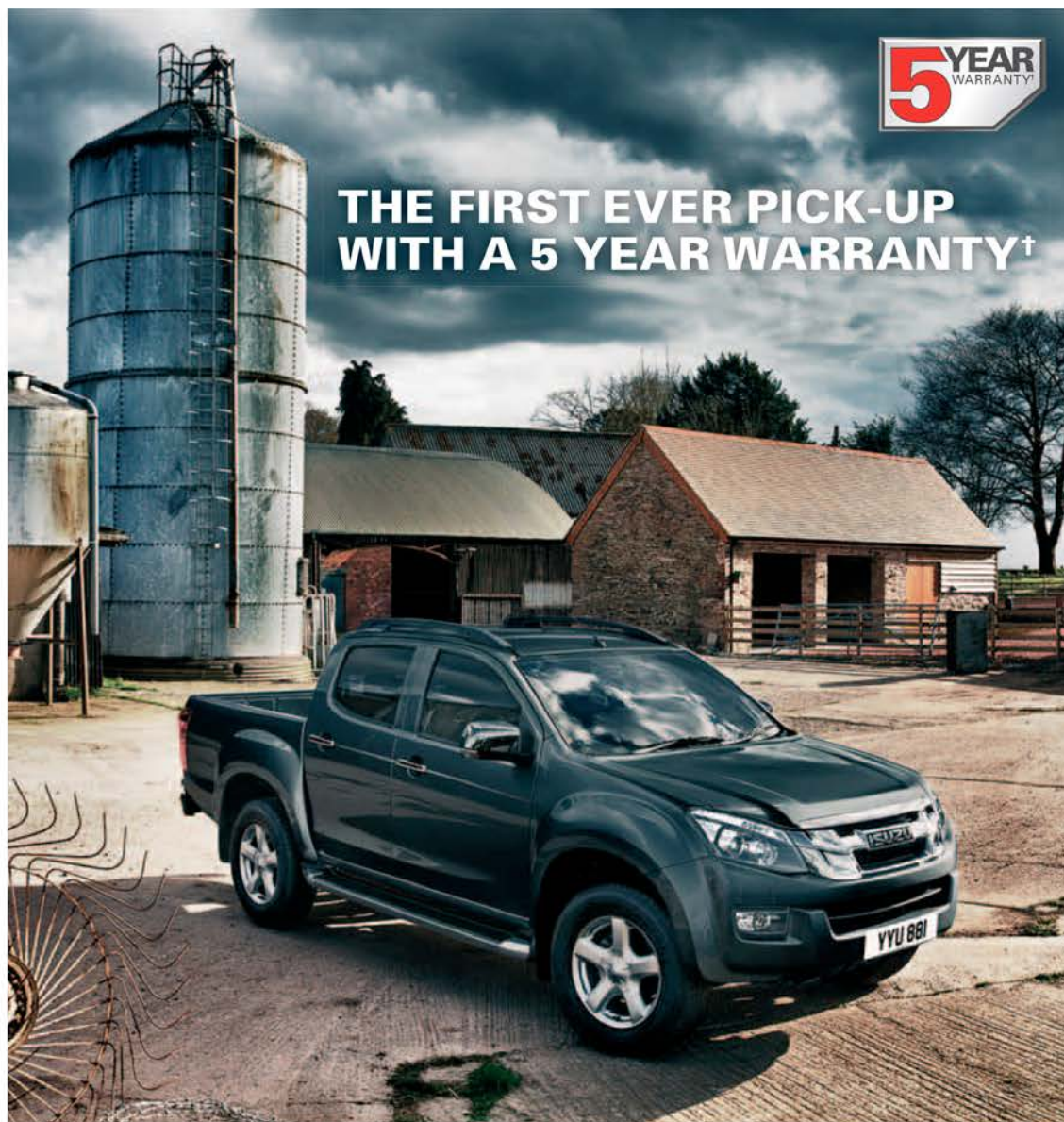
Mike recently hosted

a dinner for senior executives from Isuzu in Japan during their visit to the UK. On the menu was local venison, shot, butchered and cooked by him. Although not quite like sushi, it was much appreciated by our guests.

Mike and his D-Max will be on TV screens again in the New Year. So keep an eye open for the pick-up that really is cooking on gas.

ISUZU
UK

2012 saw the launch of a class-leading new model for the UK market - the all-new Isuzu D-Max. Complete with the UK's first 5-year warranty for a pick-up, the D-Max and its advertising carry on the tradition introduced in 2010 of- the Pick-up professionals' brand.



5 YEAR
WARRANTY†

THE FIRST EVER PICK-UP WITH A 5 YEAR WARRANTY†

TOUGH TIMES CALL FOR A TOUGH TRUCK

Isuzu only produce commercial vehicles. That's why we can provide you with the pick-up you really need. The all-new Isuzu D-Max is a tough pick-up for these tough times. It's hardworking, dependable and always prepared to go the extra mile. While other pick-ups deliver compromises, the all-new Isuzu D-Max simply delivers. That's because it's built, sold and used by professionals.



3000KG
PULLING
POWER



SUPERIOR
FUEL
ECONOMY
(38.2MPG)



2WD
4WD

SHIFT
ON THE
FLY 4x4



ACCEPTS
NEW DIGITAL
TACHOGRAPH



STEEL
TIMING
CHAIN



TWIN
TURBO

FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL 08446 626632 OR VISIT ISUZU.CO.UK



All-New
ISUZU
D-MAX

ISUZU
THE PICK-UP
PROFESSIONALS

†5 year / 125,000 miles (whichever comes first) warranty applies to all new Isuzu D-Max models. Terms and conditions apply. See isuzu.co.uk for full details.

A REWARDING YEAR IN PROPERTY

Tim Wooldridge, managing director of IM Properties plc., describes to Chris Poole how the company is continuing to grow.



We started 2012 in a good shape – 2011 was a very successful year with pre-tax profit up 112% to £31 million, from £14.6 million the year before.

Our 24-strong team has been busy building on this foundation by creating long-term value across the development, investment and asset management areas of our business. Our flagship 400-acre development site, Birch Coppice Business Park, in Warwickshire, has flourished. Online retailer Ocado is close to completing its 575,000 sq ft distribution centre ready for its spring 2013 opening, and we have submitted plans for another 1.1 million sq ft of commercial space, generating 1,000 jobs and bringing the number of people employed on site to 5,100.

In October the success of Birch Coppice was recognised at the Birmingham Post Business

Awards 2012, where judges presented us with the Property/Regeneration Award in recognition of our transformation of the former colliery into one of the region's biggest employment sites. The scheme has set a precedent and our strategy is to identify more long-term sites to deliver sustainable profit over future years.

The development team has been working hard in Germany completing our €28 million landmark logistics hub for BMW. IM Properties was selected over a number of German competitors to deliver the 600,000 sq ft facility which is the car giant's largest global non-production facility and has been used for this year's launch of the new BMW 3 and 7 series.

Simon Reed, who advised us on the BMW deal, has joined the IM team from Knight Frank. Simon has advised us on UK and European projects for many years and will work to maximise the value of our commercial assets in France and Germany, which are valued at nearly €200 million and boast high profile tenants including French railway service SNCF, Müller and C&A.

TIM WOOLDRIDGE
MANAGING DIRECTOR,
IM PROPERTIES



Other recent newcomers to the team include Rob Hemus who joined as asset manager in the investment division, Lewis Payne who joined as development manager, Matt Spicer who joined the accounts and finance team and Doug Glassford who joined IM affiliate, Spitfire Properties.

Over the past couple of years we have refocused our investment strategy, concentrating on investing in landmark, institutional-grade buildings that generate a robust stream of income. We have acquired investments at Heathrow and Birmingham airports and have sold properties

at Birch Coppice, where profits have been crystallised previously.

Within weeks of starting to refurbish our One London Square property in Guildford into one of the best office products in the town, we signed a pre-let with leading accountancy firm Baker Tilly. At Phoenix House in Milton Keynes, which we have also been refurbishing to Grade A specification, the world's largest mobile device management firm, AirWatch, has committed to a whole floor – the biggest letting in an existing building in the centre of Milton Keynes for a year.

We completed one of the largest lettings of the year at DC2 in Swindon, a prime distribution centre, which was vacated by Morrisons in May. National furniture retailer, Oak Furniture Land, took the whole building on a new 15-year lease.

Our residential arm, Spitfire Properties – launched two years ago – had a positive year. Sales rates at the Mill Hollow development in Dorridge, and at Arkenside in Cirencester, exceeded expectations. Work starts at the turn of the year on new developments at Bath, Ascot, Little Aston and Dorridge.

COMPANY OF THE YEAR!



IM Properties' success during 2012 and financial performance in 2011 was recognised at the Birmingham Post Business

Awards in October. The team scooped the Best Property/Regeneration award and carried off the top accolade of Company of the Year!

The team beat off competition for the top award from several high-profile companies including Barratt, David Wilson Homes, Mercia, Lend Lease, Wesleyan Assurance Society and Chiltern Railways. Judges said they were impressed by achievements at Birch Coppice – the region's

largest rail-served development, which has generated more than 5,000 jobs – together with IM Properties' 2011 financial performance; profits of £31 million equated to more than £1 million for every member of staff.

Tim expressed the undisguised delight of everyone at both awards: "To win our category prize as well as the Company of the Year title is fantastic, especially when the competition was so high. We

are thrilled. These awards are testament to the expertise of the whole IM team who work so hard to ensure we deliver consistently-good results even in such challenging times."

IM Properties' entry detailed its ability to drive income through development, investment and asset management as well as outlining its 2011 financial performance and its commitment to the West Midlands' future growth.



INSIGHTS



PAUL HUNT

Paul Hunt, provider of business development solutions for leaders, teams and individuals, explains how Insights has helped IM and its dealers.

It's well known that effective processes, continual training and development of its people are at the heart of successful businesses. So in 2011 IM Group introduced the Insights Discovery model to all of its senior directors and to various internal teams. In a pilot programme it also introduced the business-development process to a small number of its dealers. All were to embark on a journey of discovery.

But almost immediately, two significant outcomes resulted. The first was that one of the dealers on the pilot programme, Cross Roads Subaru, won the Motor Trader national awards Best UK Sales Team and later in the year went on to win Automotive Management's Best Sales Team Development award.

Seeing the potential benefits, earlier this year we entered into a commercial partnership with Insights Learning and Development, a global organisation based in Dundee, to use its vast range of development solutions to enhance our business operations. Having worked with Insights for several years before joining IM Group, I was invited to become the company's dedicated Insights specialist.

Through Insights we continued to learn how to effectively integrate its models and processes. The result has been further success. At this year's Automotive Management national awards ceremony, the Best Training Programme of the Year award and the coveted Best Dealership of the Year awards were both won by Jon Mathers' Unity Automotive Group, the parent company of Cross

Roads Subaru. The awards provided further proof that by integrating Insights solutions and techniques, any organisation – irrespective of size – can quickly and efficiently develop lasting commercial advantages by making individuals and their teams more effective through creating an awareness of communication, behaviours and capabilities.

SO WHAT IS INSIGHTS DISCOVERY?

The 'journey' begins with completion of an on-line evaluator, which is then converted into a unique Personal Profile of the individual. The various chapters contained within the profile are unlike other psychometric profiles in that they highlight preferred behaviour and communication styles and, without using jargon, offer clear recommendations for development. These recommendations can be quickly put into practice thereby helping leaders to become more effective, management to be more productive, sales people to become trusted advisors and teams to become more agile by realising and releasing their full potential.

The entry to understanding and working with Insights is by

using the profile to explore our own behavioural preferences. This is simplified by the use of four colours – fiery red, sunshine yellow, cool blue and earth green. Each profile shows the individual's preferred and least-preferred colour's 'energies'. It was Carl Jung, the Swiss psychologist and psychiatrist upon whose research Insights is founded, who coined the term energies. He maintained that behavioural energy is like electricity – you can't see it, but you can most definitely feel it.

There is of course no such thing as a red, yellow, green or blue person – our personalities are a blend of all of the colours and what they stand for. But we do take on the behaviour of a particular colour at a given times. So in the Insights workshops we use coloured bricks to reflect our personal colour energy order. By ordering them 1st, 2nd, 3rd or 4th we can identify our dominant and our least-used behaviours.

However, the dominant preference can be both a capability and liability. So one of Insights' major learnings is to create self-awareness of when an over-used strength (our most preferred colour energy) becomes a weakness. This is often manifested as negative behaviour and is often seen by others before we become aware of it.

However, when this self-awareness is combined with Insights Discovery coaching

sessions, the individual – or team – gets a

deeper understanding of the impact of their relationships as well as the challenges that poor communication and lack of understanding can have. This can be with peers, line managers, other team members and customers. But by asking the insightful question, 'Is the intent felt by the other person the same as the intent meant by me?' we can develop an awareness of how to effectively communicate, adapt and truly connect with others.

The Personal Profile goes into far more detail, highlighting the individual's capabilities, what they bring to their team, what their strengths are and the areas where they can improve. Profiles also show the individual's position on the Insights Wheel. There are 72 distinct wheel positions and each can quickly and graphically indicate the relationships the individual has with others. Another benefit to individuals is Insights' unique Preference Flow Graphs. These typically generate personal effectiveness questions for the individual to pose, such as: What am I doing more of at work than I naturally prefer to do? Why do I feel challenged by doing this? Or, In order to really connect with this person, what could I do more of or less of?

With meaningful and commercial benefits from Insights Discovery, IM Group has decided to continue using and sharing the programme in its dealings with partners, customers and internal teams. It has seen that its use can help to unlock difficult business challenges and situations, offer a greater understanding, and generate relevant language with which everyone can immediately engage. IM wants to continue to be the industry's leader, employing this business-development process that is, quite literally, insightful as well as being simple to use and outstanding in the success it brings.



IRISH OPPORTUNITY

Among the economies within the EU's euro zone, Ireland has been hard hit. But Irish eyes are starting to smile again. 'We may have been down – but never out!' says IM Automotive managing director, Neville Matthews, who explains why.

At last there are reports of a substantial pick-up in the Irish market – and it's Chinese! The much-anticipated Great Wall Steed finally broke cover in Ireland at the autumn National Ploughing Championships held in Wexford. Ireland's annual Ploughing Championships – Europe's largest outdoor exhibition – hosted more than 200,000 visitors over three wet and windy days at the end of September and Great Wall Motor had by far the busiest and best attended motor display.

Traffic on the stand was brisk from the start, and never flagged. The level of interest in Steed at the Championships – and since –

has been outstanding. It's been a case of all hands to the pumps for every member of staff. As always, they've all rallied round to deliver a superb team effort. We have received enquiries from a remarkably wide range of potential customers, literally from farmers and financiers to contractors and consultants.

The 'truckful of value' brand message seems to have struck a chord with the buying public in Ireland. The straitened economic climate has created a new-found appetite for sensible, well specified, value-for-money packages and the entire IM team in Ireland has been delighted to

find that there's little resistance to the idea of Chinese-made vehicles. On the contrary, the arrival of the first Chinese franchise is widely regarded as a fascinating news story. People seem to engage with it in an entirely positive and encouraging way.

A bonus to the rich crop of sales leads harvested at the Ploughing Championships is the interest from the motor trade. Pleasingly, we have had more than 30 enquiries from aspiring Great Wall dealers. The process of sifting dealer applications is now under way with the first two already appointed in the South.

The Ploughing Championships was only the first step in a series of events planned to introduce Irish consumers to our exciting new franchise. Immediately following the successful event in Wexford, in the south-east of the island, the Great Wall Roadshow travelled all the way to the north-west where the International Ploughing Championships were being held in Northern Ireland. The location was near Londonderry,

where the Great Wall exhibition was ably managed by Eakin Brothers, the Province's first Great Wall dealership. Again, the response to the new vehicles was consistently positive.

Back on the road again, and the Great Wall exhibition travelled eastward across the Province to Belfast where, in the shadow of historic Stormont – home of the Northern Ireland Assembly – members of the Northern Ireland media enjoyed a presentation from Paul Hegarty, managing director of Great Wall UK, followed by lunch and test-drive opportunities for all.

As I write these words in the second week of November, the Great Wall Roadshow is heading south and back to Dublin to complete its circuit of Ireland. No rest though – the Great Wall show vehicles will go straight to the Citywest Convention Centre to participate in the 2012 Fleet Expo event, a business-to-business exhibition for commercial vehicles.

Without doubt the launch of our new Great Wall franchise has generated a real buzz in IM's Dublin office. All agree that



NEVILLE MATTHEWS
MANAGING DIRECTOR
IM AUTOMOTIVE IRELAND

it's particularly exciting to be involved at the start of a whole new chapter in the Group's history. The journey of a thousand miles has begun with quite a few small steps... And that's not to forget our change of location that's been under way since the end of October and will have been completed by the end of November. The phased move was designed to ensure the absolute minimum impact on our

customers and the business.

We'd been in the old premises on an industrial estate in the west of Dublin since 1996 and they'd become unsuitable. Now we're bound for more appropriate premises. Indeed, if we'd sat down with a blank sheet and drawn up what we'd really like to have, our new location would have been what ended up on the paper... IM House, Baldonnell, is located within the

National Vehicle Deliveries complex and is only a few minutes' drive from our former home.

NVD handle all of our vehicle logistics in Ireland. Because of the nature of the site we have 24-hour secure access, plenty of parking and modern offices with a board room for meetings and catering facilities. In addition, NVD have made available parts storage, workshops and everything we

need. The offices were occupied by NVD's senior management before they consolidated their administration elsewhere on the site. Timing is everything, and our new home became available just as we were looking to move.

With a new franchise, new models from Subaru in prospect and a new home, the New Year is going to be very exciting!

Great Wall stand at the National Ploughing Championships



FINANCING THE FUTURE

A busy year has brought rewards for both The Funding Corporation and its retail division, ACF Car Finance, which sells the cars funded by TFC. Managing director, David Challinor, outlines the many successes.

An important focus of our energies during 2012 has been targeting, even more closely, the type of customers who are ideally suited to our product. These are people who have been refused car loans by mainstream lenders, but who can demonstrate to us that their income can comfortably accommodate borrowing repayments. I'm pleased to say that we are now moving ever nearer to our target of achieving one sale from every two customers who visit our ACF Car Finance showrooms after they have been approved for TFC finance – a conversion ratio most motor dealers only ever dream about!

Credit for this goes right across the company. It reflects the success of our extremely resourceful business acquisition and marketing teams in generating high-quality enquiries. It acknowledges the skills of our customer-contact team in taking these prospects through the very detailed application process, and of our underwriting team in accurately assessing the credit-worthiness of people who have often

had past repayment problems. And it's a tribute to the energies and professionalism at our dealerships.

The area of finance in which TFC operates is popularly known as 'sub-prime.' But this isn't a term we recognise as a description of how we engage with our customers. Our continuing quest in 2012 has been to ensure that our car buyers are provided with services and products which parallel those offered by top-end car dealerships. We have taken steps to ensure our used car stock is attractively displayed, reflecting the superb quality of the vehicles.

Rather than giving cars a cursory once-over before sale, we submit every one to an exhaustive 136-point mechanical and safety check before putting right any faults. The thoroughness of this examination resulted in ACF Car Finance becoming the first used-car dealership in Britain to have its own pre-sale vehicle inspections process accredited by the RAC. Customers are assured that our checks

are judged by the RAC to be as rigorous as those of its own inspection teams.

This year we created a partnership with Britain's leading smart repairs company – Revive! – to ensure that the bodywork on our used cars is in virtually as-new state. And 2012 additionally saw us recruit in-house valeters for all our dealerships. Their role is to remove every last trace of previous ownership from the vehicle and bring it up to factory-fresh condition.

Our post-sale surveys on all customers recorded extremely high levels of satisfaction. Perhaps the most telling question we ask is whether a person would recommend us to family and friends. Around 95% said yes.

Another customer-satisfaction milestone was reached in the autumn when we received the 1,000th comment on our ACF Car Finance customer review website. Following its launch in 2011 the website drew praise from various industry bodies, including the Finance and Leasing Association, which commended its

*From left to right,
Nigel Price, Peter
Cottle (BEN),
David Challinor,
Jane Whittle.*



Our fight against fraud continues and we have been extremely successful in identifying bogus loan applications that would otherwise have cost the company millions of pounds. During the first quarter we formed a new Financial Crime Investigation function – headed by an ex-police detective – responsible for investigating and passing on to relevant authorities all suspected cases of criminal activity involving illegally-acquired funds.

Top of our agenda for 2013 is to drive up car sales and profitability even further. We have some exciting plans, not least the opening of a new dealership in Feltham, West London, putting millions more people within two hours' drive-time of an ACF Car Finance showroom.

Our energies remain focussed on providing the right loans to the right people, and supplying them with the best possible used cars available today. By doing so, we will continue to consolidate our position as Britain's foremost specialist car finance organisation.

openness and honesty. We're delighted with the website's success and the confidence it gives to prospective customers.

2012 saw an escalation of our behind-the-scenes marketing activity, which drives prospective customers to our website and into our showrooms. The tools we use are many and various and include a very successful referral scheme that earns commission for other motor dealers and financial intermediaries sending potential buyers to us. We also operate an effective affiliate marketing programme and have ensured the ACF Car Finance website always appears early in Internet search engines. Our PR programme maintained high visibility for the company in editorial sections of the media.

New technical developments included installation of an advanced voice-recording system that allows us to drill down into types, times and locations of telephone conversations in order to monitor, compare and evaluate the way in which staff and customers interact. Earlier in 2012 a professionally-produced 15-minute video was shot at our Bristol dealership to describe the buying process for customers at ACF Car Finance. We're delighted with the result, which

is now featured on the website.

We found ourselves centre-stage in the final judging of a number of prestigious business accolades including the Credit Today Awards (for the Most Responsible Lender and Top Alternative Lender categories), The North West Contact Centre Awards (for Best Customer Experience) and the Credit Excellence Awards (Risk Professionalism). In addition, the government-backed Institute of Fundraising honoured ACF Car Finance with a top Platinum award for success in encouraging staff to make regular charitable donations, deducted at source from their salary. The Institute named Jane Whittle, TFC's marketing manager, as its candidate for their 2012 Best Individual Contribution honour.

The personal success of employees is important to us. To help individuals set realistic goals, and achieve their full potential, we have established a new performance review process. 'Performance' is the key word here as the procedure is designed to point the way to achieving agreed objectives, which the company supports in a number of ways including mentoring and new-skills training.



MOVING IN ALL THE RIGHT DIRECTIONS

While many in the auto industry in Europe are struggling, IM's Nordic operation looks set to finish 2012 with more-than acceptable sales, according to managing director, Torbjörn Lillrud.

"The car industry is going through an acid test. But Subaru Nordic is up for yet another good year. The curve on the sales chart is pointing close to 7,500 for the year – and demand for Subaru cars during the autumn feels bigger than ever.

"We still have a firm grip on the Nordic markets. In Sweden sales are up 17% against a decline in the total market of around 10%. With new customers, new dealers and many exciting new products in pipe-line, it's time to invest in a prosperous future. And in the summer of 2013, Subaru Nordic will leave its old head office in Helsingborg and move to what is the hot spot of Malmö in the Örestad region.

"Our new purpose-built premises will provide administration offices, storage, technical training facilities and a state-of-the-art showroom. The complex will be built according to the latest standards in technology with the highest-possible regard for the environment."

The first sod was cut in late October during a special ceremony attended by 40 invited guests and conducted by Örjan Rystedt, logistics manager for Skanska, the multinational construction and development company based in Sweden. "Subaru has Sweden's most satisfied customers and it is our goal that Subaru Nordic will be just as satisfied with us and our work!" he said.

Municipal councillor, Katja Larsson – in whose area the new building is situated – welcomed Subaru to the locality. "I am delighted with their investment, which will provide new jobs in the region," she told the assembled guests.

Torbjörn had confirmed that although everyone was expected to transfer from Helsingborg to the new site, some additional recruitment would take place. "Our staff is really enthusiastic about the move and, in spite of the additional commuting distance for some, so far everyone has declared their intention to stay with the company."

Ms Larsson said it felt good to have Subaru

From left to right, Örjan Rystedt, Torbjörn Lillrud and Katja Larsson use a special three-handled spade to symbolically cut the first sod to mark the start of construction of IM Nordic's new headquarters in Sweden.



*Below:
Torbjörn Lillrud and
Christer Blondell.*

as a partner. "Subaru is known for high quality. To establish themselves in a very business-friendly municipality, in a very fine position along the important E6 road, makes us very happy."

According to Torbjörn, the total space available in the new building will be more than double that of the current HQ in Helsingborg – sufficient to serve Subaru Nordic, which has operations in Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The building is due to be completed and ready for occupation during June 2013.



GREAT WALL STEED LAUNCH

A NEW ERA FOR IM



“Our proposition is one of unrivalled value. It is not only the UK’s most affordable 4x4, double-cab pick-up truck, it also offers exceptional standard specification, the lowest insurance groups and excellent fuel economy.”

Years of investment by IM Group in developing relationships with China, and some of that nation’s most influential companies, came to fruition in April when Great Wall Motor became the first mainstream Chinese auto maker to launch a vehicle in the fiercely-contested UK pick-up truck market. For many across IM it was the end of long and careful negotiations, planning and co-operation – and the start of a new era with IM importing a whole range of Great Wall models.

Managing director Paul Hegarty says the Great Wall Steed launch went extremely well – a reflection of the effort put in by GWM team members, the importance IM placed on Press and PR for the event and the dealership network build-up in the months before April. “The launch was a little later than we had hoped. But that was the right thing to do because we wanted absolutely everything to be in place and with the right culture established before Steed went on sale,” he said.

CAMOUFLAGE STEED GRABS ATTENTION

A significant part of the successful launch of Steed and introduction of GWM to British consumers has been widespread exposure to target audiences through many different exhibitions and promotions. “We started with the Commercial Vehicle Show at Birmingham’s NEC in April and have subsequently shown Steed at no less than 25 ‘county’ shows and many similar events such as the Game Fair,” explains managing director, Paul Hegarty.

“The country pursuits sector is an important market for us and we were able to place two Steeds with Selena and Simon Barr who are brand ambassadors for Realtree, the US-based international creator and marketer of the world’s most versatile camouflage patterns. Selena’s Steed was covered in a special pink

camouflage so that she could take part in the Pink Car Rally. The event raises money for the Little Princess Trust, which provides wigs for children who’ve lost their hair through cancer treatment. Selena raised £1,500 and because her Steed was the biggest and most unusual car taking part, it got a lot of attention.

“However, when Simon was driving Selena’s Steed round the M25 to the Game Fair it was spotted by Jordan – Katie Price – who has a particular affinity for pink cars. She put a message on the Twitter social networking site where she is followed by thousands of people. She asked: ‘What is that pink car?’

“When Selena answered the tweet, explaining it was a Great Wall Steed, horse-loving Ms Price posted the response, ‘I want

one!’ That was also seen by thousands of her followers.”

In another link with personalities in the world of country pursuits, three Realtree-camouflaged Steeds are being driven by the members of Team Wild TV, which was founded by three friends who share a passion for hunting and shooting sports. Ian Harford, Steve Wild and Keith Anderson publicise Steed through their online TV shows, their blogs and appearances with Realtree at Countryman Fairs.

“We really have put a lot into promoting Steed through links with groups and events that are popular with our target customers,” added Paul.

“For the media launch we arranged a briefing at a hotel in Leamington and, after an overnight stay, a road test route that took the journalists to MIRA’s proving ground where they were able to test Steed on the off-road course that MIRA’s clients use to develop 4x4 vehicles.”

Throughout the exercise, Paul and his team took every opportunity to convey a number of key messages to the motoring writers, many of whom had not previously driven Chinese-made

vehicles. “We had to dispel any pre-conceived notions and ideas that they might have had. We’re conscious that not only opinion-forming journalists, but also many people in the UK, are slightly suspicious of products made in China. They don’t associate China with being a great engineering nation.”

Steed has proved itself not only in its domestic market, where rural road conditions are among the most challenging, but also in the notoriously tough and demanding



RUGGED STEED FOR STRONGEST MAN

Steed's proven pedigree as a rugged workhorse made it the perfect vehicle to be part of the Europe's Strongest Man competition, televised during the Christmas holidays, as well as the winner's prize.

Twelve of the world's strongest men took part in the contest at Headingley Carnegie Stadium in Leeds in the summer. One of the six disciplines required competitors to lift, carry or flip

400lb sand-filled barrels to the Steed and then throw them into the cargo tub. "Each barrel weighed more than I could lift!" declared Paul Hegarty. "They really were very heavy but the guys just threw them onto Steed's tailboard. Thank goodness it's well built and more than capable of standing up to such punishing treatment."

Millions of TV viewers will see just how strong Steed is when the programme is

transmitted. The Strongest Man contest is traditionally Channel 5's most popular Christmas screening.

Eventual winner of the contest was Zydrunas Savickas from Lithuania who is now the proud owner of one of the first Great Wall Steeds to arrive in the UK. In his home country he is a celebrity with a huge fan base following all his feats of strength.



Australian market where pick-up trucks – or 'utes' as they're known – command respect only by surviving all that is thrown at them. However, it's not just the vehicle's rugged reliability message that was important to pass on.

"We needed to impress upon everyone that Steed is not only tried and tested – and takes 30% of its domestic market – but in the UK it offers customers more for less," added Paul. "Our proposition is one of unrivalled value. It is not only the UK's most affordable 4x4, double-cab pick-up truck, it also offers exceptional standard specification, the lowest insurance groups and excellent fuel economy."

Paul says he is very satisfied with the 100-or-so road tests that have been published, and the response from motoring journalists and potential buyers. "What I've read has all been very fair. And there's been a lot written! We put 10 cars

on the Press fleet and all have been flat out. Something like 95% of all reviews have been hugely complimentary and sales have been pretty much as expected.”

With Steed galloping into the UK market, Paul is now looking to an expansion of Great Wall vehicles in the UK. “The model known as H6 – a stylish SUV – will be the next model for us. We plan to launch during the third quarter of 2013. Like Steed, H6 will set new standards in value terms within its class. It’s built at a new, state-of-the-art factory at Tianjin, south-east of Beijing, which covers 3.6 million square metres, six times the size of their head office site at Baoding.

“Meanwhile, the development of Great Wall dealerships across the country continues”, said Paul. “We’re up to 50 right now and, by the time H6 is launched, we will have 60. One thing that remains the same across all of our retail partners is their appreciation of the simplicity of our franchise and their similarly like-minded approach to delivering great customer care. It’s a pleasure to work with the Great Wall network.”



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF... ...ANDREW NAYLOR

TREASURER - IM GROUP



For fun-loving, outdoor man and fitness fan Andrew Naylor, a chartered accountant and IM Group's treasurer, Saturday 25th May 2012 was not just a day in his life. It was the day that changed his life reports Keith Read

By the time the warm sun gave way to darkness, cyclist Andrew was in a medically-induced coma in the intensive care unit at Coventry University Hospital. He was not expected to survive horrific injuries sustained when he was in collision with a fast-moving Range Rover.

Air-lifted to hospital, his pelvis had been smashed, his left arm and shoulder seriously damaged and his body was covered in numerous lacerations. All bad enough, but there was worse. One of the many bones that make up his vertebrae had been smashed and completely fractured by the violent impact, severing his spinal cord...

To the amazement of medical staff, Andrew survived the days immediately following the crash. After seven days he was brought out of the coma and the awful truth became apparent. He had no feeling or movement from his chest down. He was paralysed.

Six months almost to the day after the appalling accident, which

happened on a main road near Warwick not very many miles from his home in Dorridge, I met Andrew and his partner, Sarah, at the Hunters Moor neuro-rehabilitation centre's Janet Barnes unit in Hall Green, Birmingham. His handshake was firm, welcoming and exactly what you would expect from a sport-loving fitness enthusiast, whose passions are walking, cycling, skiing and climbing mountains. Not what you would expect from a man in a powered wheelchair that he controls and manoeuvres with his right hand via a small joystick.

"I'm feeling so much better today," he says. "Last night I returned from a weekend at home. I couldn't stay overnight because the hoists and other equipment have not all been installed yet. But the lift is going in as we speak. I can't wait to get home. My number one objective is to get home by Christmas and my number two objective is to be back at work by Easter. My right arm works okay.

My shoulders work okay. I can wiggle my left arm a bit, my head's normal and I've got a brain – all the requirements for work!"

Andrew doesn't dwell on what's happened. "In fact, I can't remember what happened on that day in my life," he admits. "All I know is that I was cycling near Hatton and was joining a main road when there was a massive impact."

For Sarah, his partner of seven years, and their four children – Sarah's Zack, 16, and Abigail, 13, and Andrew's Alex, 17, and Tim, 15 – the memory of May 25th is all too clear. The children's concern that Dad had been a long time out riding... Sarah's calming comments that he'd probably had a puncture and was walking home... the children's frantic calls to reach Sarah, who was out shopping for that evening's barbecue with friends, when a policeman knocked the door... and the sight of Andrew in hospital, wired up and plumbed into a life-support machine after

surgery on his pelvis to prevent him bleeding to death.

"I am concerned at what the long-term psychological effects will be on the children, on me and on Andrew," says Sarah, a senior associate with Anthony Collins Solicitors in Birmingham. Her company – more than familiar with the consequences of such cases – has, she says, been extremely understanding and supportive as she reconciles visiting Andrew, fighting for the best treatment and care for him and looking after the home and family. "Doing the work I do I have an insight into these things and it has given me access to experts who have been able to help with issues such as planning the conversion of our home to accommodate Andrew's needs. But I sometimes feel that it might have been better to be ignorant."

Sarah says that as much as anything, Andrew's fitness has been critical in his recovery. "So many people placed in a medically-induced coma contract a virus or

pneumonia. Andrew didn't and that's down to his extreme fitness."

When we met, Andrew had just arrived for his four-week stay at Hunters Moor. He moved there from the Midlands Spinal Unit at the Robert Jones & Agnes Hunt orthopaedic hospital in Oswestry where his journey to physical recovery really started with physiotherapy. And as Andrew fought to regain every tiny improvement and meet every goal that was set, his determination to succeed was bolstered by visits from many of his colleagues at IM including chairman, Lord Edmiston, managing director, Andrew Edmiston, and retired director, Ed Swatman. "Ed has been so good. He's treated me like a son while I've been in hospital," said Andrew.

"IM has been so supportive and all the girls and colleagues from work who've been to see me... it's been wonderful. I do miss them so much – I can't wait to get back to see everyone at work." Already he's thinking about what car he can have converted to enable him to drive it from the extra-special powered wheelchair he's dreaming of. "I fancy a buggy sort of thing with a nice bucket seat!"

Surgeons have told Andrew that the nerves so violently wrenched from his left shoulder in what's described as a classic cycling accident will never recover

sufficiently to give movement in his left hand. However, there is a chance that – millimetre-by-millimetre over the next two years – they could grow to give him back some mobility in his left arm. And he's even thinking about getting out of his wheelchair. "All the nurses and staff here are convinced I'll walk again," he says with undisguised relish at the challenge.

"I've never been angry about what's happened," he adds. "But I've got to learn to be patient. It's going to be a long journey. I've got a wonderful partner who I love so much. I've got four children who I adore. I've got a right arm that works okay, my head's normal and I've got a brain – I'm so much more fortunate than so many. I'm young too. I'm only 48 and I've got so much and I have a lot to live for. I just want to get back to work."

Andrew's visits home have given him added enthusiasm for the challenges he faces. "It was so good to see our home and meet friends and neighbours in the community. And the best bit was to taste Sarah's wonderful cooking again!" The downside was the inconvenience of having to use a special wheelchair-accessible taxi. "I didn't like the waiting for the taxi. It's not like having a car when you can just jump in and go when you like. And at forty quid a trip... I thought that was pretty expensive! I think I'm going to try



using the train. The station's only just round the corner from here."

Getting about – whatever it takes – is simply a given for Andrew. No ifs, no buts. High on his agenda when we met was a trip to IM House to visit all the colleagues who had visited him while he was in hospital. "I can't wait to see them all again," he said. "I've been at IM for 19 years. It's a wonderful company. Why would an aspiring

young chartered accountant stay at one company so long if it wasn't just the best?"

Typical days in the life of Andrew Naylor came to an end on 25th May 2012. Every day now brings fresh challenges, new goals and even tougher objectives. What hasn't changed is his spirit and determination to do well and succeed in meeting and achieving each and every one.



A SHINING example

Keith Read visits IM's hidden gem

At 32 acres, with two 6,000 sq ft workshops, an underseal facility, de-wax wash bays, fuel station, offices and room for 6,000 vehicles, IM Group's Import Centre at Sheerness, on the Isle of Sheppey in Kent, can hardly claim to be hidden. But at 164 miles from the Group's headquarters in leafy Warwickshire, one can be forgiven for thinking of the centre as IM's hidden gem. For jewel it most certainly is. Every Subaru, Isuzu and Great Wall vehicle starts its life in the UK receiving careful preparation and lots of TLC from

the close-knit and dedicated team under the leadership of Dean Faulkner, IM's logistics operations general manager who was born and bred on the island.

Opened in 2005 to accommodate IM's expanding business, the site was chosen because of its proximity to the port of Sheerness, less than 1½ miles away. Sheerness is Britain's only deep-water port meaning car-carriers can dock at any time, irrespective of tides. When IM arrived at the import centre, Sheerness was already being used by the likes of Volkswagen,

ENCOURAGING YOUNGSTERS

Strong links with the Isle of Sheppey Academy, formerly Minster College, have seen two youngsters join IM Group following work experience at the import centre.

Kris Betts, today training with IM as a master vehicle technician, first met the import centre team as one of 16 students doing work experience. His commitment was such that when he went to college in Canterbury to gain his vehicle technician NVQ level 3 – a three-days-a-week course – he worked without pay at the centre for two days a week. “We covered his expenses,” explains Dean, “but when he gained his qualification we were really happy to take him on. He joined us in January

2012 and we’re now training him as a Subaru master technician.”

Another former Minster College student now working at the centre is 23-year-old Sam Dethridge. “When I was studying for my business and administration NVQ my first work experience was in the school offices. It was pretty much just doing photocopying. But my second work experience was here and it was really good. I really enjoyed it and was given lots to do – things like spreadsheets and helping Lin Donnelly, the office manager.”

When she left school in 2008, Sam had two part-time jobs – one on the check-outs at Tesco’s and the other,

through an agency, at the import centre.

“Three years ago, when IM offered me a full-time job, I was thrilled,” she says.

“IM is now funding my degree. I’m doing a six-year Open University distance-learning course. Most of it is done online although I have tutorials every three months.”

Sam now sits at her desk, next to Lin, in the small office unit where they look after all the administration. “I really love my job and I’m really grateful for the opportunities I’ve been given.”



Porsche, Peugeot-Citroën and Škoda while a government regeneration investment programme, most visible in the shape of a new £100-million bridge linking the island to the UK motorway network, made the

started. “In the past seven years we’ve had fewer than five complaints – and three of those were questionable,” says Dean. “Quality is key to everything we do here. Everything is logged

DEAN FAULKNER - “QUALITY IS KEY TO EVERYTHING WE DO HERE”

location even more attractive.

With the emphasis throughout the centre on quality and quality control, the port’s reputation for an extremely low handling damage record was an important consideration. The centre itself boasts the remarkably low figure of 0.1% complaints since operations

and recorded on our computer system’s AS400 program. From the day vehicles arrive, to the day they’re handed over to the transport company for delivery to dealerships, we record their unique location on the ground, the enhancements we carry out and anything relevant to the vehicle.”



Quality control is the responsibility of Kevin Oakley whose passion for making sure everything is 100% is acknowledged by everyone on site.

Urgently-required vehicles are prioritised for speedy progress through the centre's workshops. Vehicles can be on their way to dealers within five days of arriving at the centre, depending upon the extent of enhancement. These can include fitting rear-parking sensors, pick-up truck cargo tub liners and hard-tops, radios, alarms, locking wheel-nuts and other accessories, as well as making sure the appropriate handbook and paperwork for owners is in the glove-box.

The workshop teams are not only highly skilled, but also multi-skilled, with many years' experience between them. Their facilities are fully equipped and include inspection and smart-repair

bays. Every vehicle leaving the site has to be in show-room condition, save for removal of protective floor and seat coverings and a polish. Up to 40 vehicles a day are prepared for dispatch. Deliveries to dealers are made by locally-based DF Services who plan the schedules for maximum efficiency.

IM has 11 members of staff at Sheerness. However, with two main sub-contractors, the complement is nearer 30 on site. All sub-contract staff wear IM corporate clothing, the only difference to IM employees being their own company's name is also shown. "We don't want our sub-contractors to be different. We want them to be the same as us and to feel part of our team," maintains Dean.

High-quality foul-weather clothing is a must, especially for those members of the team who



spend much of their time outside. While it can be very pleasant on a bright summer day on what is, after all, a popular holiday location with 30,000 caravans on the island (as many as there are residents!) on a cold, grey, mist-shrouded day the heated rest room with its kitchen area and comfy sofas, where breaks are taken, is an oasis. When there's snow on the ground it's even more beckoning!

Irrespective of the weather, care of the vehicles continues with regular movement to keep oil circulating. Although batteries are disconnected, none is allowed to go more than 90 days without receiving a trickle-charge in a purpose-built charging facility. And if a battery needs replacing, the vehicle receives a new replacement of the same make and capacity.

To reduce waste, Dean and his

EXPERIENCE COUNTS



John Bratton is a senior technician with 23 years' experience and was the first technician to be employed when the centre opened. But like everyone on

site he is trained in at least one other role and was unloading parts from a fork truck when he spoke about the close-knit team at Sheerness. "We have such a lot of experience between us and it makes a lot of sense for us to be fitting the various items to the vehicles before they go to dealers.

"If you take something like a sat-nav, a dealer might only fit one a year. It could take as long for him to check the installation instructions as it takes us to

do the work because we're fitting lots and are familiar with all the requirements."

One of the demands is that cable ties are fitted at 1-inch intervals because that's what the factory does. It's a small detail but one that is important in the quality ethos at the centre.

"It's a really good company to work for," says John. "It's a forward-thinking company. You've only got to look at the different types of vehicles here to see the work we've got."



team have turned creative recycling into an art. “We want to reduce to an absolute minimum what goes to landfill,” he says. “As well as reducing what we pay to be tipped, we like the idea of recycling. For example, a local farmer uses the plastic pallets on which our tops for pick-up trucks arrive from the factory. He uses them to keep his straw and hay bales off the ground where they can be damaged by damp.” And Sheppey can be damp. Not for nothing are locals affectionately known as swampies...!

The import centre, on the other hand, is extremely dry with one of the largest surfaced areas on the island. All surface water drains into the two ditches surrounding the site. Running inside and outside

the 3-metre-high palisade fencing, they add to site security, which is extremely high. “We haven’t lost a vehicle yet and we don’t intend losing any,” says Dean.

Throughout the seven years that the Import Centre has been open, Dean has seen expansion of facilities and support from IM Group directors. His aim is to capitalise on those investments and turn the site from a cost centre to a profit centre by offering its services to other vehicle manufacturers. “As well as any new brands that IM might import, there is the potential to bring in work from other companies. That’s something we’re very keen to do,” he says. “I think the future is very exciting for us.”

WEATHER GIRL



Jayne Connor is a vehicle logistic operator and another islander, born and bred. She ensures that every vehicle she hands over to the transport company’s inspector – the last of five inspections each vehicle gets while moving through the centre – is in near-showroom condition. “All it should need when it arrives at the dealership is a polish. My role is to make sure the dealer has virtually nothing to do.” One of the final checks is a battery-condition test. If the battery isn’t up to scratch, it’s replaced.

Like every other stage of preparation at the centre, Jayne records her actions by zapping the vehicle’s bar code with her handheld reader.

Occasionally she finds herself helping out in the office – the second role for which she is trained. But she’s happy working outside, even when the weather does its worst. “When it snows, we all wrap up warm and pull together to clear it! But I like it in the summer.

“It’s like being part of a family here. Everyone knows everyone else. I’m really proud to work here.”

THE FUTURE

IN FOCUS



Andrew Edmiston looks at the growth and development of IM in the coming years.

This year has seen much time spent on planning for 2013! The company has again been profitable but with such a large group there are always businesses where we feel we can do better.

The re-organisation of our car UK management team was not something we envisaged at the beginning of the year. However, as the year took shape, it became clear that if we were going to move forward with more franchises – but further increase our cost-efficiency – we would need to consider a different approach.

Trying to bring the future into clear focus within our car business must be all about understanding our method of trading, why it is different to our competitors and how we can put all our energy into reinforcing those differences.

The car market is becoming a difficult place for many of our competitors. Our belief is

that to be successful you have to change with the way the market changes and not try to seek solace in history. Being good at something in the past is no guarantee of success for the future because the rules in the future are always likely to be different.

Our dealer network is our chosen route to market and we need to make sure our business is constructed to support the opportunities, both existing and new, we can offer our dealers. With more franchises than before – and with more coming – our future must be about how we can engage our dealers to offer great customer service to a multiplicity of customers and brands.

As we do this, and since it is our customers who pay ours and our dealers' costs, we must be absolutely determined to deliver cost efficiency that is not only industry leading but constantly improving. This takes thought and

investment and... constant change!

Across all our businesses we have a tremendous amount of knowledge and experience and we can be highly successful, even when times are difficult, if we find more and more efficient ways of applying that knowledge.

For the coming months and years, to take hold of new opportunities and at the same time improve our cost efficiency, needs us to concentrate on a few key things. We need good information about the market and about our business. We need good thinking and clear strategies and we need the right people to implement those strategies. We need continued sound financial management and we need to be clear about the role our partners play in our mutual success. Everything else is just window dressing.

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