

# imREVIEW

2017/18



## RACING LEVORG

Relive the drama of the final day of the BTCC

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## SURGING AHEAD

IM Properties continues to go from strength to strength

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## TEAM GAME

A new exciting partnership between Isuzu and the Welsh Rugby Union

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## SUBARU

IRELAND

*Subaru – this is what we are all about... That's the theme of this advertisement from Ireland ahead of the new XV launch in January 2018. It conveys the message that the IM team is developing a strategic position to ensure that the brand prospers in what has become a challenging and increasingly-competitive market. 'We want to re-focus minds on things that really matter when choosing a car because we make cars for people who understand what really matters...'*

What your car does at the bottom of a snowy hill, matters.  
How long it lasts, matters.  
How safe it keeps your family.  
That really matters.

Long weekends spent driving through woods. They matter.  
Going places you've never gone. That matters.  
That one day you'll really need to get to the airport, in the snow.  
That'll definitely matter.  
Getting muddy as a family, matters.

We build powerful-boxer-engined,  
all-wheel-driving, safety-standard-setting,  
easy-off-roading, any-weather-driving,  
forever-lasting cars.

Sure.  
It'd be nice to win some style awards.  
And polishing up our cars for a glossy  
photoshoot in Milan would be fun.  
If we were named Car of the Year 2018,  
we'd proudly tell our mums.  
If we won shiny awards for our adverts,  
we'd be very happy.  
And we'd absolutely love it if  
Paul Pogba drove a Forester.

But.  
That's not why we build our cars.

A Subaru is a car for people  
that understand what really matters.  
And that's why we build them better,  
where it matters.

**Subaru. Better where it matters.**



**SUBARU**

*Confidence in Motion*

IM REVIEW 2017/18

# INTRODUCTION



*By Andrew Edmiston  
Managing Director - IM Group*

The past twelve months since the last IM Review has seen a change in the conversations around the various boardrooms within IM Group. The company has had another excellent year but there are changes coming for all of our major marketplaces.

It used to be that the economic cycle ran for something like seven years, though with the new low-interest environment will that still apply? We have never been afraid of market corrections but we do see an importance in understanding our environment and adjusting our actions accordingly. Crucially, whenever downturns have occurred in the past, our attitude has most often been to look for the unique opportunities they offer.

What's curious about this pre-Brexit European marketplace is that not only do we have to consider the economic implications of Brexit, but also the uncertainty arising from the lack of political clarity. Plus, the advent of driverless cars, continual pressure on reducing CO<sub>2</sub> and NO<sub>x</sub> in the car market and the effect this might have on the property market, makes predicting the next few years' trading conditions extremely complex.

In an unusual twist, our finance business seems to now be facing an increasingly settled future with its new strategy working well. The Financial Conduct Authority has been extremely active over the last decade, forcing significant change on the industry. Nowadays,

for those who have remodelled their businesses to trade in a manner more in-keeping with the FCA approach, it has become possible to focus on a clear strategy that will deliver positive results. We have been working hard at this and TFC's Specialist Motor Finance arm has developed a very sound footing from which to move forward.

IM remains a fun place to be; our three main sectors – property, cars and finance – are all performing well and there is a kind of reassuring familiarity to the way we do things. It feels like we are in a rhythm, not at all complacent, but constantly raising our game and learning from our experiences. I believe we are a better business than we were a year ago.

Every year the Sunday Times runs a report covering Britain's top 250 mid-sized companies. It is not the sort of thing I usually pay too much attention to. However, this year they told me that I should really because we have moved up to number two! Thank you to everyone who helped us achieve this and our other successes throughout the past year.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'A Edmiston', written in a fluid, cursive style.



**CITROËN**

IRELAND

*November's launch of Citroën's new C3 Aircross Compact SUV was accompanied by advertisements emphasising the car's class-leading space, modular design, connectivity and innovative technology including the latest-generation Grip Control® with Hill-Descent Assist and wireless Smartphone charging..*



SUV VOW



## NEW CITROËN C3 AIRCROSS COMPACT SUV

**More Space, More Versatility**

Mirror Screen – with Android Auto, Mirror Link®

Versatile interior with advanced modularity

85 colour personalisation possibilities

Wireless smartphone charging

Active safety brake

**FIND OUT MORE AT YOUR NEAREST CITROËN DEALER  
OR BOOK A TEST DRIVE TODAY AT CITROEN.IE**



**INSPIRED BY YOU**



†5 year unlimited mileage Citroën warranty on Passenger Vehicles only is made up of 3 years' manufacturer's warranty and 2 years' extended warranty.

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# NAME FROM THE PAST

SET FOR  
NEW  
FUTURE

**AN HISTORIC GERMAN CAR MARQUE HAS BEEN RE-LAUNCHED AND IT COULD SPELL A FURTHER BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY FOR IM GROUP.**

Few people under the age of 60 will have heard of Borgward, but the company was once Germany's third largest car maker, although since its heyday the brand has had a chequered history.

Borgward can trace its history back to 1904 in Bremen. At one time its models ranked alongside the likes of Mercedes-Benz and the Borgward marque pioneered many technical advances, as well as being highly regarded for the high quality materials used in its manufacturing. However, the company crashed in the 1960s due to a complex set of issues.

It was revived initially by the founder's grandson and more recently Borgward was acquired by Foton, a subsidiary of the Beijing Automotive Industry Corporation (BAIC).

Now the new company, with headquarters in Stuttgart, has ambitious plans to expand the brand, which has been selling SUVs in China, to become a

global player. Borgward stunned everyone attending the 2017 Frankfurt Motor Show with a breathtaking four door all electric concept coupe bearing the name Isabella – an historic name Borgward reserved for its flagship models in the 1950s.

Borgward intends to enter the German market with the limited edition BX TS sporty SUV.

Meanwhile the company is building a new factory in Bremen to build electric versions of its SUV range. Borgward already has a workforce of 5,000 people and in the last 12 months has built up revenues of £1.5 billion.

Martin Dalton, IM's director of business development, said: "Foton has invested in a German R&D centre, brand new production facilities and has launched a new range of Borgward cars, initially for China. But world markets are firmly in their sights with Europe a prime focus.



“A new factory to produce new energy vehicles for Europe is under construction in Bremen so things are progressing at a pace.”

Initial production is expected to begin in 2019, with left-hand-drive cars first and this could spell an opportunity for IM’s Nordic markets. Incidentally, Borgward had a sister brand called Lloyd which used a ‘boxer’ engine which became the prototype of engines used by Subaru.

Many key European automotive executives have already been hired to push the appeal of the Borgward for western buyers, including the ex-MINI design boss, Anders Warming, who is credited with the curvaceous Isabella concept design. Borgward’s chief executive officer is Ulrich Walker.

While the Isabella concept is readied for full production, Borgward is expected to build some

of its existing SUVs at the new German factory. The BX7, a seven seater SUV, has already received European Type Approval and seems likely to enter the fiercely-competitive European market first.

There have been suggestions of 800,000 Borgwards being built at the Bremen factory by 2020 going on to 1.6 million within a decade. In China Borgward also sells the BX5 and BX6 models and is one of the Chinese companies pioneering all-electric and electric hybrid cars.

Borgward already has 70,000 orders in China for the BX7 and BX5 models.

Ulrich Walker, speaking at the Frankfurt show, said: “We are delighted that, following our successful start in China and other countries, we can now enter the German market.”

The limited edition Borgward BX7 TS and, later, the BX7 as well as the BX5 and the BX6 will

initially be introduced in Europe with gasoline-powered engines. Further models, which are under development, will follow says Walker.

He added: “Due to constant customer demand, and in order to increase the visibility of our brand and its products, we have decided to initially enter the market with a gasoline-powered version of the BX7 and the BX5. However, it remains our goal to mainly sell electric vehicles once production commences in Bremen.”



# DONNA WINS AWARD

IM GROUP'S LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT MANAGER, DONNA CHAMBERS, WAS 'INCREDIBLY SURPRISED AND DELIGHTED' WHEN PAUL TUNNICLIFFE, UK & IRELAND MANAGING DIRECTOR, NOMINATED HER FOR AUTOCAR MAGAZINE'S 2017 GREAT BRITISH WOMEN IN THE CAR INDUSTRY AWARDS.



**DONNA  
CHAMBERS**  
DEVELOPMENT  
MANAGER

"I was absolutely astonished when I discovered that I'd won the HR/Training category," admits Donna. "There was some formidable opposition from other manufacturers, including big players such as Ford, Mazda and Volkswagen."

Donna joined IM in 2008 as a temporary PA to Paul Tunncliffe. After being taken on, full-time, she moved to the after-sales department where she worked for the technical and aftersales directors. "Following that I moved into training as training co-ordinator. However, a year into the role the training manager left and I stepped in! It just happened for me, and I love it. I love working at IM, it's a great company with really great people."

Autocar initiated the award in 2015 to inspire more women to consider a career in the automotive industry where "...the current imbalance between the numbers of men and women is dramatic." Autocar says it hopes that by shining a spotlight on those women who have both reached the top, and those considered to be the industry's brightest rising stars, more will consider the rich, exciting careers that are open to them.

In voting Donna the HR/Training category winner, the judging panel took into consideration Paul's nomination, along with the fact that the Annual Dealer Satisfaction Survey showed IM Group dealers to be extremely satisfied with the advances in training – evidence that Donna had been doing a great job. Paul told the jurors: "Thanks to Donna's work, our dealers were ranked as having the most-improved performance for quality of training."

One hundred finalists were short-listed in a total of nine different categories. They assembled at Twickenham Stadium in June for the final judging and announcement of winners. "It was an insightful day," says Donna. "There were open-forum discussions from several guest speakers around the subject of diversity and women in the automotive world, and how we need to heighten their profile in this mainly male dominated industry."

There's no trophy or champagne for category winners. But for Donna, the 'trophy' is the recognition: "That's really nice – both for me and for IM Group," she says.



**SUBARU'S FORESTER RANGE IN THE UK HAS NOW BEEN EQUIPPED WITH THE AWARD-WINNING EYESIGHT ADVANCED SAFETY FEATURE.**

EyeSight is a collision-avoidance technology, which acts as a second pair of eyes for the driver and, depending on the vehicle's speed, can completely avoid and significantly-reduce the severity of accidents.

With safety one of the main objectives, EyeSight was also developed to lower carbon emissions by reducing incident congestion and lowering the economic effects of sitting in traffic.

EyeSight has two stereo cameras, mounted on each side of the rear-view mirror. They use image recognition to capture three-dimensional colour images with clinical precision. The technology can distinguish between vehicles, motorbikes, bicycles, pedestrians, lane markings and road furniture. It can differentiate between these and determine the general traffic conditions.

It was singled out for praise in the inaugural Car Tech Awards from Carbuyer and Alphar. It is already fitted as standard on the Subaru Outback.

With an emphasis on real-world tests and evaluations, EyeSight has been developed to correspond exclusively to

the individual country's traffic conditions.

In total, EyeSight uses six onboard technologies to maximise safety including Adaptive Cruise Control, Pre-Collision Braking, Pre-Collision Throttle Management, Lane Departure and Sway Warning, Lane Keep Assist and Lead Vehicle Start Alert.

The Institute for Traffic Accident Research and Data Analysis in Japan produced a study of Subaru vehicles involved in accidents between 2010 and 2014. It found that there were 61% fewer accidents involving EyeSight equipped cars compared to those without.

Globally, the milestone of one million EyeSight-equipped vehicles on the road was passed in 2016.

In the UK, Forester is the third model in the range to be fitted with EyeSight. Subaru vehicles are already among the safest on the road today, with all three vehicles in the company's SUV range receiving the maximum 5-star Euro NCAP rating.

EyeSight will be standard equipment on all Forester XE Lineartronic and XE Premium Lineartronic models.



# WRC STI FINAL EDITION



Just 150 examples of the last Subaru WRX STI will be made, each one carrying its own unique number on a commemorative plaque on the centre console. The 'Final Edition' model marks the end of an iconic series of Impreza-based cars that have won the hearts of motorsport fans and enthusiasts around the world.

Apart from each car's individual production number and 'Final Edition' badges on the door panels, the dramatic interior styling and frontal design of the 150 cars – not to mention the technical enhancements for performance and driving dynamics – will make the final WRX STIs instantly recognisable and future classics.

The Multi-Mode Driver's Control Centre Differential has been enhanced even further for exceptional handling capability. Previous models relied on a combination of electronic and mechanical control. But only electronic control has been used on the Final Edition cars to provide optimum differential control for better turning when entering a corner.

Larger, 19-inch wheels, and more-powerful Brembo brakes are standard. The opposing-piston 6-pot calipers at the front and 2-pot at the rear are made with a monoblock body to avoid uneven pad wear. Drilled rotors have been used for better heat dissipation and excellent fade resistance. This combination ensures reliable braking, even under extreme driving conditions.

Steering stability and ride comfort have been improved by changes to the suspension while interior noise suppression and insulation has been enhanced with thicker front door glass, flexible sponge material weather strip on all doors, upgraded weather glass-sealing strips, additional body sealing, higher-insulation rear parcel shelf and a filled front roof rail cavity.

The front bumper has been redesigned to suggest a more powerful, precise style of driving and enhance its low centre of gravity appearance. The lower grille is blacked out with a spun-dyed geometric texture. The opening has been enlarged – and fog lights removed – to improve cooling capability.

Steering-responsive headlights have been introduced to improve safety and increase visibility at night. The headlight beam moves sideways to match steering input and illuminate corners when turning. This functionality can be used in high and low beam as the LED headlights are now a single unit.

Eye-catching interior styling sets the Final Edition WRX STIs apart. Decorative panels in the instrument panel, gear stick



surround, door panels and steering wheel have been changed to a high gloss black finish for a more elegant feel and to create a colour-coordinated interior. Red over stitching completes the surface sections either side of the gear stick and heated front seats have been introduced to enhance passenger comfort levels.

The driver's seat has a 10-way power adjustment facility including fully-adjustable lumbar support to reduce fatigue during extended journeys. Front seatbelts and rear side seatbelts have been changed to a sporty red colour. The centre rear belt remains black while the rear seats now feature a centre armrest with cup holder. STI-branded carpet mats complete the sporty interior.

On the fascia, the monochrome LCD screen and 4.3-inch colour LCD screen have been replaced by a larger, 5.9-inch, high-definition, colour LCD screen. Red illumination and white needles on the current version's gauges have been changed to white illumination and red needles while the instrument panel glass is updated from clear to tinted. Also upgraded is the audio system. It includes DAB radio, while images from the new reversing camera are viewed from the 7-inch multi-function colour touchscreen.

Paul Tunncliffe, managing director of Subaru UK, is confident that the Final Edition will be highly sought after. "Many manufacturers will claim that at least one of their cars has achieved iconic status," he says. "The Subaru Impreza, latterly the STI, has perhaps a greater claim to this than most. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s it was the performance car of choice for most. Many a teenager's wall was adorned by a picture of one – normally piloted by Colin McRae or Richard Burns, and normally airborne!

"Naturally we are disappointed that this will be the last of the line. But we are satisfied that the lineage it represents has bought so much pleasure to so many people. The Final Edition will be a fitting end to the story and is destined to be seen as a future classic."

**Prodrive Chairman David Richards recalls iconic rally cars and a world-beating era – page 25**



## MORE AND MORE ACCOLADES FOR SUBARU

**Subaru Outback and Forester collected a quartet of awards from Driver Power, the UK's Number 1 car ownership survey.**

In the best family car category, Subaru's Outback picked up a Silver Award with an amazingly high score of 91.18%.

Subaru Forester scooped Gold Awards for ride-and-handling and safety features with the Outback also picking up a Silver Award for practicality and boot space.

Steve Fowler, Editor-in-chief of Auto Express said: "This is an outstanding result for Subaru, with the Outback making its owners very happy indeed. Topping the ride-and-handling and safety categories is hugely impressive, while second place in

practicality and in the family car class confirms how highly owners rate their cars."

Forester is a large SUV designed around the mantra of "do anything, go anywhere" while the Outback is the world's first crossover to successfully combine the benefits of a passenger estate car with the all-road capabilities of an SUV.

Both Subaru Forester and Outback have 5-star Euro NCAP safety ratings, Symmetrical All-Wheel Drive and EyeSight, Subaru's advanced collision avoidance technology.

### Vehicle Category Awards Winners:

- Best Family Car - Silver Award  
- Subaru Outback

### Major Vehicle Judging Category Winners:

- Ride-and-Handling - Gold Award  
- Subaru Forester
- Safety Features - Gold Award (Joint)  
- Subaru Forester
- Practicality and Boot Space - Silver Award  
- Subaru Outback

# MILES BETTER IN A D-MAX

**AN ISUZU D-MAX UTILITY HAS BEEN CROWNED OVERALL WINNER IN THE LCV CATEGORY OF THE 2017 MPG MARATHON.**



The event is open to all production cars and commercial vehicles with the aim of finding the most efficient route between set checkpoints around a 350-mile course. Strict time limits are enforced to make conditions as close to the 'real-world' as possible and mean competitors must drive at the set speed limit.

During the tough two-day event the new-generation D-Max achieved a hugely impressive 51.2mpg.

The official combined cycle fuel economy figure for the double cab

model is 40.4mpg. However, in the real-life driving demanded by the rules of the MPG Marathon the D-Max delivered a money-saving 26.8% increase.

This was the first time an Isuzu has been put to the MPG Marathon test since models were fitted with a brand new 1.9 litre turbo diesel engine, which produces 164 PS and 360Nm of torque. The engine builds upon D-Max's workhorse character and retains its 3.5-tonne towing capacity and 1-tonne payload while providing a quieter, more

refined and more-economical driving experience.

Another key benefit is that the new engine meets Euro 6 standards without the need for the addition of AdBlue.

William Brown, operations director at Isuzu UK, said: "We're absolutely delighted with the result because it shows just how efficient the new 1.9 litre turbo diesel engine can be. It is testimony to all the hard work that has gone into the new-generation Isuzu D-Max to create such a high-quality product."





# HOME & AWAY IMG ARE WINNERS

**IM GROUP'S AUTOMOTIVE DIVISION HAS SCORED A DOUBLE WINNER IN A GROUND-BREAKING MARKETING DEAL.**

Part one was a sponsorship agreement with the Welsh Rugby Union which saw the senior men's and women's teams take to the pitch in shirts sponsored by Isuzu. Millions of fans across the global rugby world saw the international Welsh teams with the Isuzu name emblazoned across the red shirts.

However, behind the scenes a second agreement was being reached just as the season was opening, which saw the teams swap into distinctive dark anthracite-coloured shirts with Subaru replacing Isuzu on the kit for away fixtures. It's a novel rugby sponsorship deal that has never been seen before and gave IM the opportunity to have two bites of the cherry for international exposure for its leading automotive brands.

Martyn Phillips, the WRU chief executive, said: "We took a new and innovative approach to our latest shirt sponsorship negotiations and looked at ways to maximise value for our partners and increase exposure for our teams on a global scale.

"Switching between Isuzu and Subaru for our home and change kit is an exciting twist on the traditional way of doing things and we expect both jerseys to be extremely popular with supporters around the world.

"To associate with two hugely significant Japanese brands in this way as we build towards the Rugby World Cup in 2019 in Japan is a major coup for Welsh rugby and will pay dividends as it further improves the global appeal of our national game."

Paul Tunncliffe, managing director of Isuzu and Subaru in the UK said: "Through our Isuzu brand we have an excellent relationship with the WRU. The pick-up brand will always be the lead focus for this project, but when the WRU came to us with a proposal that allowed us to include Subaru, we immediately agreed."

Fans in the huge crowds at international fixtures could be seen proudly wearing both sets of kit, replicas of which have been selling strongly at the Welsh RFU website and shops at the famous Principality Stadium in Cardiff.

*See page 65 for the full story.*



# NEW D-MAX



Despite many of its competitors launching new models in 2017 – and a reduction in the size of its latest, highly-efficient, Euro-6-compliant, diesel engine – Isuzu's latest D-Max launched in May has continued to do well, says William Brown, operations director for Isuzu UK.

"It's true that we got the new D-Max at a time when many of our competitors were unveiling all-new pick-ups. But we've been very fortunate in that the sales rate has been maintained.

"Customers who have taken the new vehicle are very happy with it. As we expected, there have been some question marks over the size of the new engine because it is smaller than the previous model – 1.9-litres against 2.5-litres. However, the evidence is quite clear. Once customers have driven the vehicle they realise that it is much quieter, much smoother, more efficient and it actually tows better because Isuzu have optimised the gearing. It's just that initial perception of a 1.9-litre engine that we're having to overcome with our marketing.

"Interestingly, the new model has been very well received in the fleet market where we continue to increase our efforts. One of the many reasons why fleet buyers like the new D-Max is because it does not require AdBlue to meet the latest emissions legislation. That, coupled with the fact that it is a modern, efficient diesel engine and the vehicle is very reliable – something Isuzu has long been noted for – has resulted in some excellent feedback. Orders are still coming from existing fleet customers and we've also been able to conquest some new ones. That is very good news."

Isuzu engineers settled on the 1.9-litre engine for D-Max because development simulations showed it to be the optimum size to blend

efficiency and achieve the torque necessary for D-Max to retain its core workhorse capabilities of a 3.5-tonne towing capacity and 1 tonne payload. Meeting Euro 6 regulations without the need for AdBlue injection was another key benefit of the new engine.

The cast-iron cylinder block has induction-hardened bores. The engine features high-efficiency combustion chambers, graphite-coated pistons, ceramic glow plugs, an inlet manifold with a swirl control valve and a variable-geometry turbocharger. The induction hardening process uses melt-in liner technology to bond the molecular structure of the metal inside the cylinder bore, resulting in a stronger cylinder, prolonged life and eliminating the need for cylinder liners. The newly-designed combustion chambers achieve the most efficient mixture of air and fuel as well as optimised swirl, which reduces pumping losses. These design features contribute towards improved fuel consumption and emissions figures versus the old model.

As with previous D-Max models, shift-on-the-fly 4x4 is a key feature of the latest pick-up. A rotary dial allows the driver to select four-wheel drive on the move and is also equipped with low range gears.

The range line-up from the much-loved D-Max is retained with Utility, Eiger, Yukon, Utah and Blade, and a range of single, extended, and double-cab variants available.

# WE MEAN FLEET BUSINESS

ISUZU IN THE UK HAS STRENGTHENED ITS FLEET TEAM WITH NEW APPOINTMENTS THAT MARK THE EMPHASIS ON THIS ASPECT OF BUSINESS SALES.

During the past four years, Isuzu has grown extensively in the fleet market sector with D-Max the truck of choice for many companies with bespoke needs.

Neil Scott has been appointed as national fleet sales manager and Sean Smith as fleet and used vehicle manager.

Both men know the Isuzu brand well. Neil joins Isuzu from a 4x4 aftermarket supplier, whilst Sean previously worked with Isuzu as a fleet controller and has more recently held various positions in fleet management. They join a team headed up by Alan Able, national sales manager, and are supported by Amy Ahern as fleet administrator.

Alan Able said: "The appointment of Neil and Sean is a real coup for the Isuzu business. Between them they have many years of experience, Neil at the front end of 4x4 pick-up sales and Sean with his knowledge and skills in fleet management. They will strengthen the Isuzu proposition to our existing customers and new prospects.

"We are all really looking forward to taking this aspect of our business forward. We appreciate that the car industry in the UK in particular is getting ever more competitive, with the fleet sector being tougher still.

"But when you say tough, you have to say Isuzu D-Max in the same breath. If anyone can succeed then it's our strong new team and the even stronger D-Max."



Neil Scott



Sean Smith





# BRING ON THE ARCTIC



**A multi-award winning pick-up that Autocar described as “unstoppable” was introduced to the Isuzu range late in 2017.**

The awesome New Generation D-Max Arctic Trucks AT35 is unlike any pick-up in both its looks and its truly outstanding capability. This Isuzu model was engineered to shine in the most gruelling conditions and is the result of close technical collaboration between two respected off-road and pick-up specialists.

Isuzu's AT35 is based upon the strong and durable D-Max pick-up, which is re-engineered

by Arctic Trucks, an Iceland-based specialist engineering company with a long and renowned history in Iceland and Scandinavia as a creator of 4x4 vehicles able to take on the most demanding terrains and conditions.

Autocar wasn't the only UK motoring magazine to be massively impressed by this extra-special vehicle. CAR said: “Off-road enthusiasts in particular will appreciate its go-anywhere ability and that they can customise it to their specification. Plus, who wouldn't love something that looks like a road-going monster truck?”

The 2017 model year Isuzu D-Max AT35 is available as a double-cab with a choice of manual or automatic transmission. It is based

on the New-Generation Utah and has a high level of standard equipment, including keyless entry and push button start system, a 7-inch multifunction colour touch screen, DAB radio, Apple CarPlay™ and Android audio, satellite navigation and a shark-fin antenna. Black wheels are fitted as standard, and silver wheels are available as an option.

In addition to the above, further exclusive Arctic Trucks upgrades have been made to distinguish it from the rest of range such as tinted windows, tailgate damper, Arctic Trucks branded embroidered headrest, carpet mats, door sill covers, badges on the instrument panel and door sills.



# DEAN FAULKNER HONoured

More than 40 years of voluntary service with the St John Ambulance by Dean Faulkner, general manager of logistics operations at IM Group's import centre at Queenborough on the Isle of Sheppey, has been recognised. He was awarded the British Empire Medal in the Queen's June 2017 Birthday Honours List.



Dean, who joined the Isle of Sheppey Cadet Division as an eight-year-old in 1974, received his medal in October from the Lord Lieutenant of Kent, The Right Honourable The Viscount De L'Isle MBE, at a ceremony at Penshurst Place, near Tonbridge, the ancestral home of the Sidney family. William Sidney, the Lord Lieutenant's father, was the 1st Viscount De L'Isle. In April, 2018 Dean will attend a reception at Buckingham Palace for recipients of the Queen's Birthday Honours.

Having had to wait three years until he was 11 to be enrolled as a St John member, Dean immediately joined the band and started to learn the side drum – the instrument he still plays today in his capacity as Bandmaster. The Isle of Sheppey band is one of only four surviving St John bands and the only St John marching band. As a result, they are in great demand and participate in 15 to 20 regional, national and international events every year – as well as band practice every week!

Since being appointed Bandmaster in 2003, the band has more than tripled in size and new uniforms and instruments purchased.

In his career with the St John that has seen him rise from a Cadet to Deputy Assistant Commissioner for Youth in Kent (responsible for almost 1,500 young volunteers) and promotion to the Order of St John as a Serving Brother, it has also provided Dean with a wife... "It was through St John that I met Claire 35 years ago," he explains. "She currently runs the youth side of the Isle of Sheppey St John Ambulance."

Claire, and their two sons, Reece, 22, and Kieran, 20, joined Dean at the medal presentation. "It was a real family affair," says Dean. "I was shocked and very humbled to receive the BEM. Even to be nominated is very special. But to be awarded the British Empire Medal is truly amazing. I have to thank all those who support the work we do for St John on and off the Isle of Sheppey."

Although Reece has followed Dean into IM Group, working at the Sheppey Import Centre, and Kieran is training to be a mechanic with one of IM's sub-contractors on the site, neither has yet joined the St John Ambulance. "They're clearly leaving that to Mum and Dad," says Dean."



# IM GROUP ADD NORDIC KNOW-HOW TO UK-BASED TEAM



WHEN ANDREW EDMISTON ANNOUNCED THAT TORBJÖRN LILLRUD – THE MAN WHO STEERED IM NORDIC TO OUTSTANDING SUCCESS SINCE JOINING THE COMPANY 14 YEARS AGO – WOULD BECOME PART OF IM GROUP’S UK-BASED TEAM, THERE WAS SOME SURPRISE WITHIN THE ORGANISATION. BUT, AS HATTY GOURUN DISCOVERED AFTER JUST AN HOUR LISTENING TO THE TWO SELF-CONFESSED ENTREPRENEURS DISCUSSING THE FUTURE FOR THE COMPANY, IT’S EVIDENT THE MOVE IS AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT OF THE MASTER-PLAN TO GROW THE BUSINESS THROUGH WHAT PROMISES TO BE CHALLENGING CHANGES IN THE CARS WE DRIVE.

“Bringing Torbjörn to the centre of the business is all about growth,” confirms Andrew. “He’s done a fantastic job over the past 14 years. We’ve seen stratospheric growth in the Nordic territories. With the automotive industry in Europe and around the world facing a lot of change and huge challenges, I thought it was a good opportunity to give him a bigger field to play in. I want Torbjörn to bring to the Group some of the things

and thinking that he brought to our business in Sweden.”

For Torbjörn, who becomes IM Group’s automotive development director, the move could not have come at a better time. “I have a lot of ambitions,” he says. “For me, life is extremely boring if I start to become static. Administering something that is successfully up and running is not part of my personality. I get energy from problems and possibilities!



## “I WANT TORBJÖRN TO BRING TO THE GROUP SOME OF THE THINGS AND THINKING THAT HE BROUGHT TO OUR BUSINESS IN SWEDEN.”

“We’ve shared information between the two countries and companies on many occasions. Often I’ve said to Andrew there is scope for growth in both the UK and Nordic markets even though the UK market is totally different to the Nordic. But there’s huge potential to grow our existing automotive business in the UK. I can also see potential in growing our existing brands – mainly Subaru and Isuzu, but also Citroen – into more markets and into more countries in Europe. In addition, I can see opportunities to help our business development team find new franchises and new brands to bring to our portfolio.”

While retaining an oversight on IM Nordic, Torbjörn will have a free-rein brief to develop IM’s automotive business, including its existing Subaru and Isuzu brands but also working alongside IM’s business development team looking at Chinese brands. Chinese manufacturers find themselves in a strong position as European vehicle makers are confronted with stringent legislation to reduce

CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. “By 2020 we know that the average fleet CO<sub>2</sub>, as dictated by the EU, has to be a certain level,” explains Andrew. “For Subaru I believe it will be extremely challenging. If we miss that level there will be extremely penal and painful fines to pay.

“To remain committed to Europe, Subaru has to achieve that target. And all manufacturers are struggling with it. Some will end up paying fines for a year or so. But by 2021 we know that Subaru’s average fleet CO<sub>2</sub> will be significantly reduced taking us well inside the target.”

Recently, Andrew and his father – Lord Edmiston, founder of the IM Group – met President Masanori Katayama, head of Isuzu. During the Tokyo Motor Show at the end of September, Andrew, together with Torbjörn, met President Yasuyuki Yoshinaga, head of Subaru. “So within the space of a month we’ve seen the Presidents of Subaru and Isuzu, and members of their Boards, to basically ask the same question,” says Andrew.

“We asked them what they were doing to make sure they could stay in Europe. Overall, I got very satisfying answers from both of them.

“The first thing we wanted to know was whether they were committed to staying in Europe. Their answer to that was ‘Yes’ – very, very clear and emphatic. The second question was, if they were committed, could they deliver it. The answer to that was also ‘Yes’.”

Precise details of what these two key brands for IM plan to do remain commercially sensitive. But it’s fair to say that it involves electrification because that provides a quick and effective solution to reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. In the case of Subaru, its new Global Platform, recently introduced on the new Impreza and the latest XV and due to be used on all the company’s models in due course, has been designed to accommodate alternative-power-trains, including hybrid and EV.



“OUR STYLE AS A COMPANY IS ENTREPRENEURIAL. TORBJÖRN IS CERTAINLY THAT AND I LIKE WORKING WITH ENTREPRENEURIAL PEOPLE. IT’S CHALLENGING AND DIFFICULT – THEY PUSH ME AS MUCH AS I PUSH THEM.”

So how will customers feel?

When IM undertook customer clinics on attitudes toward internal combustion engines and EVs, two distinct groups emerged. The first felt that it was all a bit of a confidence trick and they were being forced to buy products that were not really necessary. They wanted to stay with diesels because they offer excellent torque, which is good for a 4x4 vehicle. “They didn’t really believe in it and there was no need to worry – it was all 20 years away,” says Andrew. “But we know it’s imminent!”

The second group acknowledged it was all much closer and were prepared to try something new. “Faced with these two groups, the answer is to find people from the second group to buy the kind of vehicles that are going to be produced,” says Andrew, “because it’s going to be changing for everybody inside the next three to five years. People in that first group will have to move toward buying the kind of vehicles being produced.

“If the market embraces EVs, then I think we’ll start to see more than a 20% to 30% shift – perhaps closer to a 50% uptake. But my gut feeling is that there will be a resistance to change from many because there’s a cost attached to it. Also, as soon as we get towards 50% of motorists having EVs, we will begin to see significant problems with the power supply grid and how the electricity is provided.”

On the question of Chinese manufacturers’ potential strength in the field of EVs, Andrew has a very clear view. “No vehicle manufacturer makes any profit out of EVs. The profit is made by the battery manufacturers. So the Chinese

suddenly represent quite a threat. Why?

Because Europe has put in place stringent CO<sub>2</sub> requirements that European manufacturers have been happy to go along with. They’re happy because they have the internal combustion engine technology to meet those requirements while the Chinese don’t. It’s effectively been a barrier to entry for the Chinese.

“Now, however, the Chinese are moving forward with EVs because of their pressing domestic requirements. And they also have everything you need to make batteries – people who understand battery software, rare-earth materials (which they effectively have a monopoly on) and so-on. China has the raw materials, the car manufacturers, the battery manufacturers – who are all getting into bed with each other – and the incentive to make EVs because they need to get CO<sub>2</sub> out of their own cities. While European manufacturers face serious challenges, and can’t make money out of making EVs, the Chinese can easily meet all the hurdles and will naturally want to make lots of EVs.

“Whereas the EU legislation was once a barrier to entry, it could now be damaging to the local industries. Potentially, what you will see is unrest in Europe, especially from the unions, and possibly some push-back on the stringent CO<sub>2</sub> legislation. If it does play out like that, then we have access to the Chinese. All the work we’ve been doing in China for the past 20-or-more years could suddenly give us a big pay day.”

Torbjörn is also optimistic about the future and IM Group’s opportunities. But he says some caution is necessary: “Yes, we are genuinely

optimistic about the future. However, we have to prepare ourselves for the fact that the road will be bumpy, which means that all of us have to work together as a team. Also, the question of whether EVs are the total solution to reducing CO<sub>2</sub> is, of course, very debateable. How the electricity for EVs is generated has to be taken into consideration.”

Andrew shares his caution: “This is a road that all of the industry is embarking upon, together with government and environmental pressure groups. But not everybody can fully understand what the implications are. I believe the law of unintended consequences is going to come into play within the next two to three years. We have to be careful about kidding ourselves that, globally, it is the solution. I don’t think it is. I’ve heard some very senior automotive industry leaders saying that the only reason they are moving toward EVs is because they meet the time-scales quickly. Long term, they are not the right solution. For the longer-term, hydrogen is probably the right solution.”

Being forced to go to EVs has diverted manufacturers’ ability to develop new technologies and better solutions, such as hydrogen, says Andrew. “In some ways you could argue that being forced to go the EV route is counter-productive to reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions because it has stopped investment into other technologies that cannot be brought forward quickly enough.

“We’ve just gone through a period of 20 to 25 years when manufacturers bought-out most of their distributors in European countries. There are not many private distributors of any scale left –

IM Group is one of only a few and it is one of the largest. However, the push to improve CO<sub>2</sub> has forced manufacturers to focus their R&D budgets on these new power-trains, and it's brought major problems for them – problems of focus and resource. To counter the resource issues, a number of manufacturers have decided to divest themselves of what they deem non-core activities, such as small distributorships in some of the smaller markets around Europe. Hence we picked up Citroen in Ireland. Others have been sold, we know, in Sweden. So we feel that there is a lot of opportunity for us as we move into a window where a number of established brands will be selling off some of their market.

“So you can see that in this period of shifting sands within the industry, having someone like Torbjörn by my side as we begin to plan how the Group should grow is good. It's certainly the right time to be beefing up the top of the business and using the expertise that we have within the company to plan the growth for the business going forward. At the same time, it leaves room elsewhere in the company to develop more management and operational roles in different parts of the Group.

“Our style as a company is entrepreneurial. Torbjörn is certainly that and I like working with entrepreneurial people. It's challenging and difficult – they push me as much as I push them. Dreaming big dreams and finding ways to achieve them is fun. And if you're having fun at the top of the business, there really is so much power in a business that can do that!”



**TORBJÖRN LILLRUD**  
AUTOMOTIVE DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

## CULTURE SHOCK?

Moving from Sweden to the UK has not been an easy step in terms of family, admits Torbjörn. “But I am genuinely happy to come here because this is a fantastic company with a lot of highly-skilled people. We have so many resources here – CRM, IT, finance etc. There are so many skilled people in this organisation. I'm extremely proud to be here and to be able to work with these people in the future. IM Group is a financially-strong private company and that gives me confidence. The finances are there... The people are there... So let's go in and see what we can do!

“It's also a very creative atmosphere here. I've come from IM Nordic, a small company where we only talk about cars, cars, cars and sales, sales, sales! It's been extremely fruitful, of course, but here it is different. It's more international and more multi-

faceted. This gives me a lot of energy.

“I look forward to the day when someone comes up to me and says: ‘Wow! – Well done!’ because I want to be successful.”

Torbjörn's image of the UK has been somewhat influenced by television. “Every year in Sweden we are watching the programme where everyone is singing ‘Land of Hope and Glory’ and ‘Rule Britannia’ – the Last Night of the Proms from the Royal Albert Hall. That – and Mr Bean – is England for me!” And he says that the country is very friendly. “People here are more open and more welcoming than we are in Sweden. We are much quieter and shy. Here, if I go out and ask a question or sit down and take a coffee while I look at my map, people start to talk to me. That is something I'm not used to and something that my partner, Ruth, and I, like very much.”

# OUTSTANDING RESULTS FROM *outstanding* YOUNG PEOPLE



*Outstanding is an understatement of the impressive, best-ever results from the Grace Academies, founded by IM Group chairman, Lord Edmiston.*

But the academic performance by students from some of the least affluent communities in the West Midlands is only half the story. The three academies have helped to nurture and direct youngsters who have matured into fully-rounded members of society.

There are three Grace academies – in Solihull; Darlaston, and Coventry. Each had a tremendously good academic year. All share the same specialist business and enterprise academy status and ethos of developing tomorrow's leaders.

Behind Grace Academy is the philosophy that all young people have great potential. The academies' task, in partnership with the young people and their families, is to nurture and develop this raw talent.

Dr Jamie Clarke, chief executive of Grace Academy, said: "This last year or so has seen the culmination of extremely hard work by the staff, students and the positive support and backing of the parents who sent their children to our academies.

"They do this with the knowledge that our education is based on our distinctive ethos of sound Christian values that ensures our students

appreciate the excitement of learning, the rewards of personal challenge and the importance of responsibility to others. As a result, our students become true citizens of the world."

Dr Clarke said that students had made remarkable progress and that a completely independent examination system had validated the results. He went on: "Our academies are industry-standard learning spaces, where students have the opportunities to work with business people to develop their 'real world' learning."

So back to the somewhat crude but essential measurement of academic results... How did the individual academies do?

Students at Grace Academy Solihull celebrated achieving outstanding GCSE results after rapid improvements over the past three years, culminating in a 'Good' Ofsted rating.

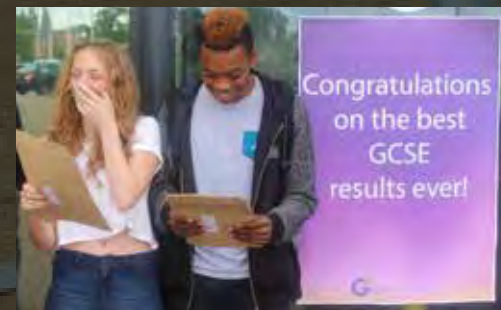
It retained its place as one of the highest-performing, and most-improved schools in the region for the third year running, with average attainment improving across all subjects by half a grade.

An outstanding 81% of students achieved the new Grades 4 to 9 in English, which is the equivalent of A\* to C, with 45% achieving more than the expected progress.

Ofsted highlighted the Solihull Academy's careful planning of innovative teaching to meet the needs of individual students, as well as a drive to improve students' progress. Combined with a focus on challenging the most



*“These results reflect the hard work of staff and students with the support of parents and carers. And we will build on this success as a foundation for continual improvement.”*



able students, this resulted in the percentage achieving higher grades in maths more than tripling since 2016.

Grace Academy Solihull's Post-16 Centre continued to improve further, with senior students achieving their best ever results for the third year running.

The academy celebrated a 195 increase in the number of students achieving at least three A level passes, and 86% of students entered for three A levels were successful. The average Applied A-level grade was Distinction\*, which is the highest grade awarded at A-level.

Particular subject highlights include psychology, where 80% of students achieved A to C grades. In engineering the academy saw 70% of students achieve a Merit or better (equivalent to a B grade).

Principal Darren Gelder added: "The key role of education is to prepare students for the next stage of their education or future career. We have been focussing on their maturity, commitment and approach to ensure they are ready for the next challenge.

"We want them to achieve positive outcomes academically, but also be people that can have a positive impact on society. We are delighted that 100 per cent of students who applied for university successfully gained places in their chosen universities."

Coventry has always been a bell-weather of the UK economy. In days gone by it was

the 'Motor City' or Detroit of the UK. But the city also had strong aerospace and heavy-engineering industries.

This has strongly influenced the performance of education within Coventry. However, against this backdrop of a challenging local economy, Grace Academy has out-performed its peers.

Despite a more challenging grading system, the academy saw 42% of students achieve five or more GCSEs at A\* to C – up 10% on last year.

Assistant Principal for curriculum and standards, Gopal Baria, said: "The work both teachers and students have put in at after-school revision sessions and intervention has been successful."

At senior Post-16 years, Coventry Grace Academy recorded a 100% pass rate in all BTEC subjects and A-Level results improved by one full grade. Again, 100% of students who applied to university secured a place on their chosen courses.

The increasing focus on teaching and learning led to outstanding BTEC results with 100% of students achieving a pass or above across all BTEC subjects this year. Among the particular subject highlights were Health & Social Care, with 87% of students achieving Distinction\* grades. All students also achieved Distinction grades in Performing Arts.

A-Level results increased on average by one grade from last year, with the best results coming in Art, Photography and Psychology.

Commenting on the results, Mitch Chadwick, Head of Post-16 at Grace Academy Coventry, said: "I am very pleased that we have seen a large improvement in results this year, particularly in A-Level subjects.

"We will continue to build on this success offering a different, more-improved curriculum for students to prepare them for their next steps in work, apprenticeships or university and further education."

Finally, at Darlaston many students have received top grades and the majority of students achieved Grade C equivalent or above in English and Maths. This follows the successful Ofsted inspection this year where Grace Academy was awarded 'Good' status.

Principal Carl Salt said: "I am proud of the hard work and achievements of the staff and students. The high aspirational standards we have set over the past year are reflected in these GCSE results."

At senior level, the results were even more impressive. Students and staff are celebrating an amazing 100% success for Post-16 students in their A-Levels and vocational exams.

Mr Salt added: "These are our best ever sixth form results that reflect the fantastic commitment of both our staff and our hard working students."



## SUBARU XV

SWEDEN

*With all eyes focussed on the new Subaru XV following its Premiere, advertisements in Swedish publications pulled no punches. 'This is a car for 'doers' – not a car for those who walk around dreaming. With four-wheel drive, 22cm ground clearance, X-Mode and EyeSight, it takes you wherever you want. So stop dreaming about a more adventurous life. Make your car a Subaru XV.'*

# PREMIÄR NYA SUBARU XV SLUTA DRÖM. GÖR.



### NU ÄR DET PREMIÄR FÖR NYA SUBARU XV

Det är ingen bil för dig som går runt och drömmer. Den är till för dig som gör. Som inte låter dig luras av påklitrade offroad-detaler och hutlöst dyr kromad plast. Med fyrhjulsdrift, 22 cm markfrigång, X-Mode och EyeSight som standard tar den dig vart du vill. Alltid. Så sluta dröm om en mer äventyrlig vardag. Gör.

**NYA Subaru XV från 244.900:-**

**subaru.se**

**SÄLJSTART 2 DECEMBER**

Bränsleförbruk. bl. körn. 6,4–6,9 l/100 km. CO<sub>2</sub>-utsläpp: 145–155 g/km. Bilen på bilden är extrautrustad.  
\*Efter 1500, 3000 och 4500 mil.

**3 ÅRS FRI SERVICE\***



**SUBARU**

*Confidence in Motion*

A portrait of David Richards, an older man with white hair and a slight smile, wearing a dark blue suit jacket over a white shirt. He is standing with his hands clasped in front of him. The background is a blurred outdoor setting, possibly a racetrack or stadium.

# WORLD-BEATING PARTNERSHIP

*The names of Subaru and Prodrive are inextricably linked thanks to three World Rally Championship manufacturers' victories and three drivers' championship wins with the all-dominant Subaru Impreza. Inspired by the rally cars Subaru produced the iconic WRX road cars, the final edition of which was launched in November. Keith Read invited Prodrive's founder and Chairman, David Richards, to reflect on a unique, world-beating relationship.*

PRODRIVE  
FOUNDER & CHAIRMAN  
**DAVID RICHARDS**



## SUBARU & PRODRIVE

Unbeknown to David Richards, one of Subaru's top executives – Ryuichiro Kuze, President of Subaru Technica International – had been monitoring the then four-year-old British motorsport company during the 1988 season. He watched Ari Vatanen pilot the Prodrive BMW M3 on the 1000 Lakes Rally in Finland. "I was unaware of his presence in Finland, but he obviously took note of the car and of the team and how we operated," says David. It was not the best of events for BMW and Vatanen, who retired with steering problems. But it was to mark the beginning of a relationship between Subaru and Prodrive that would be world-beating and one of the longest in the history of motorsport.

"Come the Safari Rally the following year Mr Kuze sent me a note asking if he could come and see us on his way through London as he returned

to Japan from the Safari Rally," explains David. "He came to Banbury to see us and explained that Subaru were about to launch a new range of cars and they were going to be targeting a younger audience. There was going to be a shift in the positioning of Subaru in the future and he had been tasked with using motorsport as a marketing tool to assist in making this happen. He said they would like to enter the World Rally Championship, and would we be interested.

"We had a meeting here and, by the time he got off the aeroplane in Japan on his way home, he had a proposal from us to which he responded saying, 'If you can respond that quickly, I think we can work together.' That was the start of the relationship."

The first Prodrive-developed Subaru rally car was based on the Legacy. Prodrive signed Markku Alen to drive for the team. Interestingly, Alen had

won the 1988 1000 Lakes Rally when Mr Kuze had been studying the Prodrive team. It didn't take long for the partnership to make its mark with the first season in 1990 seeing Alen's Group A Subaru Legacy RS taking 4th place on the 1000 Lakes Rally.

"The Legacy was always intended to be superseded by the Impreza," said David. "But Subaru was very insistent that they wanted to see the Legacy succeed before we embarked on the Impreza which, in our opinion, was going to be a significant improvement. Luckily, in 1993, Colin McRae won in New Zealand with the Legacy and that allowed us to change over to the new car, which we'd already had in the pipeline, testing, developing and getting ready.

"There were a lot of carry-over parts from the Legacy. The gearbox lasted for many years as did





the engine. The basic layout was very similar, but the Legacy was a little bit bigger and a bit heavier, so the Impreza was a big step forward.”

Over the years there would be many developments of the Impreza. David says his personal favourite was the first of the WRC series, launched in Spain in 1996. “It first ran in the Monte Carlo Rally the following year. It was a two-door car, styled by Peter Stevens and it looked sensational with the new colour, the Mica Blue that we introduced. Of all the rally cars there were at the time it was, I believe, the first elegant rally car. It made a big impact at the time. It was a great project.”

For Subaru and Prodrive it was the beginning of a halcyon motorsport era. Success, which had started with Colin McRae’s World Champion title in the Group A Impreza, continued with Richard Burns’ and Petter Solberg’s victories in the World Rally Championships. David speaks of his Subaru drivers with a father-like fondness: “We took Colin on as a real youngster,” he says. Colin’s father, Jimmy, was well-established as a competitive rally driver.

“Colin joined us when he was just out of his teens and he grew up with the team – Colin was the team, and the team was Colin... It was one big family in those days. It was a pioneering time for us. We were a tiny organisation punching way above our weight with a car manufacturer that almost nobody had heard of before then. And it touched a nerve with the public. Colin’s computer

game also came along at the same time, which added to the excitement and ‘Subaru fever’ that was gathering impetus with every event.”

Colin was, says David, an extrovert character in the car, but less so on a personal basis. “In a car he was simply extraordinary. So much so that he would make the front pages of newspapers, not just the sports pages. It was a wonderful era.

“Richard Burns was a different character altogether. Richard was more calculated. He was more controlled in how he went about things. The two of them were chalk-and-cheese but, despite what’s been written about them in the past, they were good friends and they got on well together. The rivalry was stirred up by the media. Richard went on to win a World Championship with us and carried on Colin’s legacy with Subaru.

“Petter Solberg was another of the Colin McRae-style characters, very exuberant, exciting in a car and, equally so, exciting out of a car. He was always enthusiastic, always good with the team and he got the best out of the car at that time. It was during a period where the technical rules were changing and with those changes it was becoming increasingly difficult to keep the Impreza competitive. New teams were coming along, but we just did our best. Right from the early days with the Legacy and Impreza, the Boxer engine layout and the in-line transmission were of great benefit in balance and giving us a low centre of gravity.”

Those attributes continue to offer huge benefits

“COLIN JOINED US WHEN HE WAS JUST OUT OF HIS TEENS AND HE GREW UP WITH THE TEAM – COLIN WAS THE TEAM, AND THE TEAM WAS COLIN...”



## SUBARU & PRODRIVE

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in the road car, not to mention the 2017 British Touring Car Championship-competing Subaru Levorg where the team was required to reduce engine power output in order that the car's superior road-holding didn't leave the rest of the field standing! Not that the restrictions made any difference to the final outcome. Like the Impreza in rallying, the Levorg was victorious, taking several wins and the outright British Touring Car Championship.

David certainly has no doubt that Subaru's in-built design features contributing to limpet-like road-holding were a significant advantage during the early days of the Subaru/Prodrive motorsport relationship. But the evolution of rival manufacturers' cars as they took advantage of rule changes made the task of winning world championships ever more difficult. However, the legacy of Subaru's rally victories continues. "It is amazing to this day", says David, "that despite the fact that Subaru hasn't been in the World Championship for the best part of 10 years, the following that they still enjoy and the iconic blue-and-yellow of the team colour scheme, you can

see everywhere around the world. You can go to the furthest-flung parts of the world and you'll see a blue-and-yellow Subaru and you'll see someone with great affection for that era.

"We've had a number of long-standing and iconic relationships with partners that have really helped to formulate what Prodrive is today, and none more so than our relationship with Subaru. That was a critical period of our development. It gave us six World Championship titles and we were best-known for them in that period of time. I would say that of the periods of our development as a company, I look back on that era with the most affection. At the time it was hard work – but there was a lot of fun going on in the background."

There have been many significant and pivotal moments in Prodrive's relationship with Subaru. But is there one that stands head-and-shoulders above the others?

"If I look at that era – and I've got this picture hanging on the wall in my study at home to remind me of the occasion – it's the sight of Colin McRae lifting that Rally of Great Britain and World Championship trophy in Chester in 1995.

**"...DESPITE THE FACT THAT SUBARU HASN'T BEEN IN THE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP FOR THE BEST PART OF 10 YEARS.... YOU CAN GO TO THE FURTHEST-FLUNG PARTS OF THE WORLD AND YOU'LL SEE A BLUE-AND-YELLOW SUBARU AND YOU'LL SEE SOMEONE WITH GREAT AFFECTION FOR THAT ERA."**

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It also brings back memories for me of when Ari Vatanen and I won the World Championship 14 years earlier. Colin's victory was the result of an extraordinary amount of hard work from a lot of people. More importantly for me it was the way in which we had worked, hand-in-glove, with our colleagues in Japan. The cultural differences are significant between the British and the Japanese; but we had the most wonderful relationship during that period. Mr Kuze was pivotal to that – right from the outset through to those World Championship successes. I often look back and think about those times.

“It was obviously a sad day when Subaru decided to withdraw from rallying. It was during difficult times for the car industry. Our relationship was almost 20 years old... Not many motorsport/manufacturer relationships last that

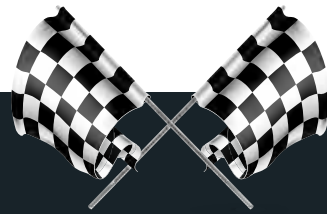
long... Most of the other car manufacturers in Japan had withdrawn from motorsport activities at the same time. It was simply a very difficult period for everybody. Having said that, sometimes things come to a natural end and we were fairly philosophical about it and accepted the situation.”

David has, over the years, put together an impressive collection of important Prodrive cars from the company's history. It includes one of Colin McRae's and one of Richard Burns' WRC Imprezas as well as a couple of road cars. “My brother, Nick, turned up at the house the other day driving his Subaru!” says David.

Prodrive still maintains a close relationship with Subaru despite no participation in the World Rally Championship. “We still do special projects together,” explains David, “particularly with Subaru in America. We've had a number of

exciting Impreza projects including a trip down the Cresta Bobsleigh Run with Mark Higgins driving, the lap record for a car round the TT Course on the Isle of Man and the sub-7-minute Nurburgring record – the fastest saloon car around the Nurburgring ever.

“There are many people here who were part of those teams who won all those World Championships with Subaru and who still have great memories and affection for the brand. I am also still very close to Bob Edmiston and Andrew, who I see quite regularly. During the 1990s and early 2000s, we produced a number of special vehicles for IM Group and they were always willing to work with us on special editions. So I will enjoy driving the 'Final Edition WRC STI Impreza' to bring back some of the memories of the great products that we produced together in the past.”



## SUCCESSFUL ERA



SUBARU AND PRODRIVE WON THEIR FIRST FIA MANUFACTURERS' WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP IN 1995. THEY SUCCESSFULLY DEFENDED THE TITLE IN 1996 AND 1997. THE FIRST DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP WIN CAME IN 1995 FOR COLIN MCRAE IN THE IMPREZA 555 AHEAD OF HIS TEAM-MATE, CARLOS SAINZ.



IN 2001 RICHARD BURNS TOOK HIS FIRST AND ONLY DRIVERS' WORLD TITLE, BEATING COLIN MCRAE (WHO HAD MOVED TO FORD), TOMMI MÄKINEN (MITSUBISHI) AND THE DEFENDING CHAMPION, MARCUS GRÖNHOLM, (PEUGEOT).



THE THIRD DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP CAME FOR PETTER SOLBERG IN HIS IMPREZA WRC IN 2003 AHEAD OF SÉBASTIEN LOEB AND CARLOS SAINZ (BOTH CITROËN).



# REVIEW

*of the year*

2017

*By Andrew Edmiston*

Coming into 2017 IM was riding on the back of three extremely successful years where not only had sales and profits grown, but the feeling around the business, the level of confidence and the sense of rhythm was gathering pace. In many ways, nothing has changed in 2017 – we have again had a particularly successful year. But beneath the surface there is a feeling that our current economic cycle will pause at some point.

Economic cycles starting and ending is simply a natural part of business life. If you are not prepared to accept that then you probably have no place around the boardroom table. Accepting economic change is not the difficult part. The difficult part is anticipating when change might happen, what it might

fact, as I think about it, the finance industry would not be exempt either; so that is a hat trick of huge anticipated change across all our businesses!

Perversely these conversations can actually be stimulating. When you are working and discussing with talented people, challenging – but always insightful – views come forward. We are not afraid of the future, quite the reverse – times of change are also the times of greatest opportunity. It's exciting.

On the theme of excitement, you will know from the last issue of IM Review that 2016 saw the BTCC Subaru Levorg begin its first campaign in the British Touring Car Championship. We considered that year a great success, with the Levorg becoming a

that achievement, the raw emotion of motor racing – and especially motor racing with one of our own brands – being almost palpable. Nevertheless, we felt rightfully proud of the team's and the Levorg's 2016 achievements.

Early in 2017 Jason Plato brought the new season's Levorg to our HQ for a presentation to our staff. One of the wonderful things about representing a product that our staff can identify with is that it is never difficult for us to become emotionally involved with projects like this. Together we looked forward to the season ahead and, having so narrowly missed out on the ultimate prize the previous season, we almost dared not speak of it... But, quietly, we were all hopeful of something very special happening in 2017. Our two


IN BUSINESS, I SUPPOSE THE FIRST THING YOU CONCENTRATE ON IS ENSURING YOU MAKE SOME PROFIT. BUT IF THAT IS THE ONLY THING I DON'T BELIEVE YOU CAN BUILD A TRULY SUCCESSFUL COMPANY.

like look like and, lastly, what to do about it. Conversations among our senior management during the year have begun to turn to this subject, along with talk of how the car market looks to be in a state of change and how that might even impact the property market. In

race-winning machine fresh out of the box. I remember the season-ending finale of 2016 bringing with it the slim chance that we could also win the drivers' championship with Colin Turkington. I also remember that as the drama unfolded, and Colin fell just short of

main drivers – Jason Plato and the young, but fast, Ash Sutton – were both eager to do well, and Warren Scott's BMR team already had a championship-winning pedigree. In the early part of the season things did not quite go to plan and at certain points it looked as though





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we had left a lot to do if we were going to have any chance of being in the mix at the final race weekend – Brands Hatch in October.

During the course of the year, and at certain tracks such as Oulton Park, the Levorg began to spring into life and the pace of the Levorg and our drivers, particularly Ash, was beginning to tell. You can read about that final race weekend elsewhere in this IM Review, but to say we were delighted with the outcome is an understatement. Most people know that Subaru has a fabulous reputation in the World Rally Championship, having won numerous rallies and championships during its time in the sport. But as an IM-initiated project, the BTCC Levorg perhaps carried an even greater level of anticipation. As a company, we are proud of our drivers, team BMR, our staff – who certainly wear their heart on their sleeve when it comes to Subaru racing – and, of course, the Levorg itself.

A huge thank you to everybody involved in this very special story of success.

During the summer, I was able to visit our Chicago office and take a look at The Corners of Brookfield town centre and mall complex that has become a cornerstone of IM Properties' US activities. What an experience that turned out to be! Along with Lord Edmiston, Gary Hutton, Tim Wooldridge and Rob Gould it felt like we walked every inch of our development (though that couldn't be the case because there is apparently 200 miles of pavement across the site.) We spoke to our developer and rental agents to gain a really thorough impression of exactly what we are doing. According to Rob, across America there are far more covered malls than the market can realistically

sustain. It is quite easy to find some of these in the USA and, on almost every occasion, they seem to be empty and with little real activity happening. With the clear thinking of our IM Properties team The Corners of Brookfield is a unique project in that it brings together a much wider cross section of the community into a development that contains retail, residential, commercial and community space. Offering an almost unbelievable reduction on the operating cost of a covered mall, by bringing these elements of the community together, we have almost created a new town environment with excellent amenities, high quality, low cost and a real sense of community. I must confess to being just a little proud of what our team is achieving there. In business, I suppose the first thing you concentrate on is ensuring you make some profit. But if that is the only thing I don't believe you can build a truly successful company. In this development, I feel we have an excellent example of what IM is all about – innovation and success. This is measured not only by more than just a financial return, but also by the way in which we bring people together, serve them well and help them to better live the life they would like. As I write this it seems quite a lofty statement, but in all our three main businesses, when you dig under the surface this is what we are trying to do. And in that way we will deserve, rather than demand, any profit we make.

While we were in Chicago with some of the Group's senior management, including Lord Edmiston, we attended an international conference titled the Global Leadership Summit. Hosted by an internationally renowned and Harvard-studied mega-church, Willow Creek, the conference attracts some of the business

world's top names. It was the first time our senior managers had done something together like this and its impact on us was worthwhile. The real message is that none of us working within IM Group can afford to ignore the need to keep learning. In some ways, our business lives are a reflection of our lives, full stop. By this I mean that, as we have often said, people are critical to our success. Therefore, the bigger we become as individuals the bigger our potential as a business. I heard an interesting quote once: 'If you want more, don't just get more but become more'. I take this to mean that to become 'bigger' as people and as a company we will end up deserving a bigger financial result. Therefore, don't just try and do better let's be better.

International rugby is an arena that we have never touched before. If you had said the words I am about to write before the year started I am not sure I would have quite believed it. During the year we were approached by the Welsh Rugby Union to consider shirt sponsorship of the Welsh national rugby adult teams for our Isuzu brand. Since we represent Isuzu across the whole of the UK there were numerous questions that we had to answer. For example, what is the sense in engaging a major sponsorship for only one of the four home nations? How large a percentage of our time and effort would our Isuzu team need to dedicate to activating such a key sponsorship? And is the rugby audience one that could bring significant benefit to Isuzu?

As we attempted to answer these questions for ourselves one thing became abundantly clear. The WRU are a great bunch of people, as eager for us to be involved with them as they are with us. And, using that old cliché, nothing really seems to be too much trouble!

Nevertheless, when dealing with decent people, while it is something that we consider extremely important, the numbers still have to work. Over the course of the summer we discussed back and forth and, eventually, came to an agreement – we were to be the new shirt sponsor of the WRU's national teams!

Speaking as something of a football fan I already know that the world of international rugby attracts a unique following and holds quite a special place in the hearts of those nations that participate in the sport at the highest level. We know that as a target group rugby fans are ideal for the Isuzu D-Max, and in the WRU we found a perfect foil for our Isuzu mantra – the pickup professionals. It has been fascinating to get to know people associated with Welsh rugby and how they mix sport and professionalism in a way that allows both elements to neatly co-exist.

The first games where the team sported the Isuzu logo on their shirts were the autumn internationals. Some members of the IM management team met Warren Gatland and other key staff for a celebratory dinner immediately prior to these matches and it was noticeable how relaxed and at-ease they were with each other. I came away with a great deal of confidence that however smart this tie up proves to be, both sides will work tirelessly to ensure its success. And I think that is probably the key.

By the time those autumn internationals came around the new Isuzu Wales rugby shirt had broken all sales records which, I think, demonstrates that Welsh rugby fans understand what a great theme lies behind this partnership.

As the automotive world marches towards an ever-greener future, this year saw the launch of a brand-new Isuzu engine. To meet reduced



emissions requirements Isuzu downsized their previously 2.5-litre engine to 1.9-litres. At the end of last year, we did a lot of work to prove to ourselves that Isuzu's claims about this new engine – that it would tow better than the old one while being more fuel efficient – were correct. But 2017 saw the ultimate test of that view because around mid-year it went on sale.

The results have been satisfactory with existing customers comfortably making the switch although it has been a little more difficult to continue the pace at which we were winning business from other brands. There is no sound reason for this other than perception. However, by understanding this issue in more detail we feel well prepared to resolve it over the coming two years. Our armoury is full; the Isuzu D-Max remains the best product on the market and one of the only trucks with the ability to meet emissions legislation without resorting to the use of AdBlue technology.

Subaru has had something of a transitional year as some of our older products have been sold out awaiting the arrival of newer models, such as the all-new Impreza and all-new XV. The UK car market has proved quite challenging this year. Indeed, some of the sales gains we have made in the past few years have been reversed in 2017. That fact certainly provides us with the necessary incentive to ensure that sales of the new products get off to the best-possible start and that we achieve the result these new cars so clearly deserve. The new models are the first to be built around Subaru's new Global Platform and when I first

drove the new XV in the locality around our IM Nordic offices in Malmö I confessed to being genuinely surprised at the overall feel and sophistication of the car. It is fantastic.

These days you don't need to have read the newspaper for very long to hear about how the motoring world is planning an 'electric' future and here at IM our belief is that there is a lot of hype surrounding this issue. But our task is to see through the hyperbole and get under the skin of what is really likely to happen. We are already well on the way to scoping out the changes we will need to make to our business to accommodate a different sort of future.

Over the past two years Torbjörn Lillrud has been preparing for a succession within IM Nordic, allowing him to leave his role as MD and begin work, centrally, as automotive development director, focusing on delivering some of the opportunities that these industry changes will bring. We are determined as a company to continue with what is now a long tradition at IM of turning change into opportunity. Already there is much that is happening behind the scenes and this has provided a new level of impetus and creativity amongst all our senior management, the fruit of which I hope will be written about on these pages in forthcoming years.

Having worked with Christer Blomdell over numerous years, I was delighted to be able to confirm his appointment as our new MD at IM Nordic. In the months since he took over Torbjörn's old role, momentum has continued and there

remains a familiar feel about the atmosphere and culture within IM Nordic despite Torbjörn's absence. In fact, the handover occurred at around the time a measurable improvement in currency rates occurred. So life is still all about timing, it seems!

One of the fascinating dynamics of the vehicle fleet electrification subject is the way in which this will profoundly affect not only our automotive business but also our property business. We have some extremely alert and insightful people working within IM Properties and they have been quick to understand the wide-ranging implications if the development of vehicle electrification proceeds quicker than we expect. For example, the UK currently consumes around 60GW of power. The recently-approved Hinkley Point power station will add another 3.5GW in around 30 years' time when it is commissioned. Full electrification of the vehicle fleet will add an estimated 15-18GW of extra power requirement. Even if you are possessed of limited mathematical ability it is not too difficult to work out that something's gotta give...

There are of course lots of solutions to this thorny little issue. But having an insight from both our automotive and property businesses will, I hope, afford us a better view of how events might develop and where the huge opportunities of the future might lie. And if you are interested in what we think about all this, I'm not going to tell you!

This will also impact our Spitfire house-building business since in both commercial and domestic

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property, power – and acquiring cost-effective and secure access to it – is already of paramount importance. We have had a good year at Spitfire with the company producing an excellent result and now being a business very firmly into its stride. The requirement to purchase new sites for development in a fast-growing business is relentless and I really do want to mention the fact that our growing team works extremely hard to ensure that we can source the best sites since without that key element every other part of our process thereafter is compromised. That word ‘process’ is important because businesses run better when they are in a good rhythm. But the very word bespoke (as in Spitfire Bespoke Homes) suggests individuality rather than developments that are the product of a set process. How we have learned to merge these two important things has become the key to both our successes and our future.

Some years ago, when we were in the thick of the PPI reparations and the industry being required to clean up its act by the FCA, we reached a watershed moment in our TFC business. It is never our style to do things that damage customers. In fact, a hallmark of IM Group is that we desperately want our customers to be delighted with any interaction they have with our business. Of course, it is very difficult for this to always be the case, but that should never stop us trying. We operate in an area of the market serving customers with credit ratings lower than prime. But, rather than feel aggrieved at some of the major challenges the legislative environment has brought to TFC over the years, we have been able to adapt our business to the changes the FCA have introduced. Over the past few years we have also adopted a new commercial

strategy and 2017 has been the year that the strategy really came of age. TFC is based in Chester, some distance away from our head office in the centre of England, and as such it is easy to forget the hard work that goes into transforming a business to remain competitive in such a highly political and regulated environment. I want to acknowledge the hard work from everyone in the TFC team and let them know that we are grateful.

Around mid-year we received two years’ notice from HS2 – the nation’s new high-speed rail link – that our current Coleshill HQ will be subject to compulsory purchase. ‘The train is coming through – whether you like it or not!’ Having been made aware of this over the prior months, and even years, this was no surprise to us and around the same time we were in a position to present some new HQ drawings to our staff. These showed the general concept and some details of our proposed new headquarters building due to be completed in time for a mid-2019 relocation. There have been many meetings and conversations, together with plenty of research about how we use our current building, and thoughts about how we might use the new one. The pace of the project will quicken during 2018 and no doubt there will be plenty of pictures from the site, charting developments during the year, included in next year’s review. For now though, it has forced us to consider what kind of business we wish to be over the coming decades. There is a very long and complicated answer to the question but, for now, I will just give you my simple one-word answer:

BETTER!



# ALL NEW IMPREZA IMPRESSES

BY CHARLES MILLER  
& KEITH READ





FANS OF SUBARU'S IMPREZA HATCHBACK WERE BLOWN AWAY WHEN THE ALL-NEW VERSION WAS UNVEILED AND MADE ITS EUROPEAN DEBUT AT THE FRANKFURT INTERNATIONAL MOTOR SHOW IN SEPTEMBER. IT'S THE FIFTH GENERATION OF THE IMPRESSIVE IMPREZA SERIES THAT HAS WON OVER THE HEARTS OF DRIVERS WHO NEED A COMPACT GO-ANYWHERE VEHICLE WITH GREAT CAPABILITY AND THE REASSURANCE OF PERMANENT ALL-WHEEL DRIVE, BUT WHO DON'T WANT SUV-SIZED VEHICLES.

Safety-performance and future-proofing have been at the forefront of development of Subaru's versatile new Global Platform (SGP), which is revealed on the latest Impreza. It is also used on the XV that was unveiled at the Geneva Motor Show in March and will be launched in the UK in the New Year. In time, the SGP will be employed across the company's entire model range. William Brown, who was appointed operations director for Subaru UK in May, says the SGP heralds an exciting era for Subaru. "It has been designed to protect Subaru in the future as alternative-powertrain models come on stream. Whether that's hybrids or EVs has not yet been revealed. But the new platform is able to accommodate all those requirements.

"It's very exciting and great that Subaru have invested in future-technology designs. It has been a big commitment for them, but it shows that they are investing in electrification and the European market in particular."

William says that whatever future-technology models are launched by Subaru, both right-hand-drive and left-hand-drive will be available simultaneously meaning that customers in IM Group's important markets – the UK, Nordic and Baltic countries – will have access to the vehicles. "This will help us to broaden our customer base as we draw in motorists who might not have considered Subaru in the past but who definitely want to drive an alternative-fuel vehicle," he says.

He points out, however, that Subaru have their time schedule. "We have to think in terms of seeing the first alternative-powertrain model over the next few years. For the time being we are focusing on petrol automatic-CVT models. Diesels will also continue, certainly into 2018, although Subaru does take notice of the current thinking by many governments on diesel vehicles. That's why they are focusing on the alternatives that will become available. Obviously there is a big influence [on what

they do] from the US market where they don't need diesel cars."

One of the core benefits of the SGP is improved driving capability and enhanced dynamic feel. To achieve optimum dynamic feel, straight-line stability and handling need to be high, noise and vibration need to be low and ride-comfort needs to be compliant yet firm. To achieve this, chassis rigidity has been significantly improved across four key areas: front body lateral bending; torsional rigidity; front suspension, and the rear sub-frame. These improvements give a more-dynamic response from the chassis with the vehicle reacting quickly to driver steering inputs. This allows the driver to react quickly to hazards and effectively position the vehicle.

Improvements in noise reduction and vibration have also been achieved by the new engineering, along with even better ride comfort.

EyeSight, Subaru's driver assistance system, is fitted as standard in the UK and the all-new Impreza follows Subaru's unique formula of Symmetrical All-Wheel Drive paired to a Boxer engine. Heavily revised engines and Lineartronic transmissions are fitted to the SGP to ensure that Impreza is the most capable C-segment hatchback ever. The stiffer chassis, more-responsive handling and acceleration ensure a significantly-improved driver experience, with improved collision avoidance, while retaining Subaru's renowned off-road capability.

The car's new design gives a tougher, more-dynamic interpretation of the classic Impreza with Subaru's hexagonal grille and hawk-eye headlight family 'face'. Built on the proportions of outgoing Impreza, the new model has sharper lines focused towards the rear of the vehicle. Functional elements are also included to ensure Impreza is fit for purpose, such as a raked-back windscreen and lower roofline at the rear to increase aerodynamic performance.



## NEW IMPREZA

been designed to make sure the driver is free to focus on the road ahead and enjoy driving the car. The dashboard profile is heavily sculptured and is one continuous piece, while the seats have been designed to feel substantial and make the occupants feel secure. The quality of soft touch plastics and finishes have been improved across the interior, without losing the functionality and hard-wearing features that Subaru customers love.

The all-new Impreza is fitted with an 8-inch touch screen, and the system is equipped with Apple CarPlay™, Android Auto™ integration and DAB radio. A new combination meter is also included, which provides additional detail to the driver, such as the status of EyeSight. A Multi-Function display sits on top of the dash and this provides at-a-glance information on key vehicle systems.

Lower by 10mm, wider by 35mm and 25mm longer in its wheelbase, the new Impreza has an impressive stance. The cabin is wider by 29mm at the front and 34mm at the rear and has 26mm more rear-seat leg room. Maximum luggage capacity has also been increased by 10 litres by having a 100mm wider boot opening and the depth of the boot increased by 41mm.

At launch in the UK, a new 1.6-litre engine will be available with a 2.0-litre joining the range later. The 1.6-litre from the FB series, is port-injected and 70% of the components in the engine have been redesigned. The compression ratio has been increased from 10.5:1 to 11.0:1 and the overall engine weight has been reduced by 14kgs.

The 2.0-litre is also from the FB series of engines. It has direct-injection and 80% of the engine has been redesigned. Overall weight is reduced by 12kg and the compression ratio has been increased from 10.5:1 to 12.5:1.

Impreza has Lineartronic – the first Continuously Variable Transmission (CVT) adapted for AWD use. Lineartronic has been designed specifically for use with Boxer engines and Symmetrical All-Wheel Drive to optimise fuel consumption via a stepless gear ratio and optimal power band. It also reduces torque fluctuations, removing the 'surge' traditionally associated with CVT gearboxes. For the new Impreza, the ratio coverage has been widened and the weight of the transmission reduced by 7.8kgs versus the outgoing car. This increases acceleration performance and fuel efficiency.

William says the all-new Impreza is the first in a series of launches that will continue to establish the brand in the UK and maintain the niche-brand status that it enjoys. "We do not intend to compete with the bigger-volume brands. Together with Impreza, what we are planning is to get Subaru recognised as the premier all-wheel-drive brand and develop that market with our focus on the core models – XV, Forester and Outback."



A close-up, profile shot of a man with a shaved head, looking down with his hands clasped in a prayer-like gesture. He is wearing a dark blue racing suit with white and light blue accents. The background is a blurred outdoor setting, likely a racetrack.

# DRAMA, AGONY, ECSTASY

**THE FINAL 2017 BTCC  
RACES HAD THE LOT!**



## BTCC FINAL RACES



Subaru star driver Ashley Sutton started the last day of the 2017 season with a slender 10-point lead over his closest rival, the two-times BTCC championship winner, Colin Turkington. But what a day the final three races would bring!

Ashley stormed to victory to claim the 2017 Dunlop MSA British Touring Car Championship crown – but it was a real test of nerves, emotions and driving skills as the battle went right down to the very last race of the season!

What a fantastic victory for the 23-year-old in only his second season in the highly-competitive BTCC championship, especially as his rival was the much more experienced twice-Championship winner, and ex-Team Subaru driver, Colin Turkington.

Just as amazing was that this was only Subaru's second year in one of the most competitive and grueling race series in world motorsport.

It was euphoria, fireworks, photographers' flash guns, huge cheers and a track invasion from the fans at the end of the day! But what an emotional rollercoaster the final three races of the season were on Sunday, 1st October at Brands Hatch.

The serious drama of the day started from the moment the first race began on Sunday morning with Ash's Levorg sitting on the grid in the number three slot after Saturday's brilliant qualifying session.

In front of young Ash were 15 laps of a 2.43-mile track that had started off wet and was just beginning to dry out – one of the worst nightmares for a driver and the team as the decision has to be made to risk going out on slicks, or to play much safer with wet-condition tyres. In short, slicks bring increased risk of crashing. But wets mean slower lap times.

Adrian Flux Subaru Racing team boss Warren

Scott made the call – Jason Plato, and his Levorg, further down the grid, was on wet tyres while Ash started on slicks.

Fans around the circuit, and those who crowded into the Subaru pits garage, held their breath for the start of the first race. In theory, any one of four drivers could win the 2017 championship although, realistically, it was really down to two drivers – Ashley Sutton in the Subaru and Colin Turkington in the BMW.

Even before the drivers had turned a wheel in anger in the first race of the day, hopes, emotions and tensions were high. Expressions on the faces of fans and team crew in the Subaru pits garage said it all.

But back to the track. Pole-sitter Jack Goff unfortunately demonstrated just how tricky conditions were as his Honda Civic Type R slid wildly through Paddock Hill Bend in the greasy



conditions and made an unhappy introduction to the safety barrier. Drama on the first corner of the first race. On the damp surface, through one of motorsport's most daunting corners, Goff simply lost control and his Eurotech Racing Honda directly in front of the packed main grandstand.

Meanwhile, ice-cool Ash kept his cool, and the correct racing line for the conditions, and his Levorg delivered him safely through the first of what would be dozens of high-speed challenges on the day.

Fans in the Subaru pits garage watched as cars that went off the racing line soon went off the track as the race progressed. For many it was hard to hide their emotions as everyone knew just what was at stake in these final races of a long season.

With 28 cars behind him for several laps Ash was running second. But with nine laps to go Tom Ingram's rear-wheel-drive and

longer-wheelbase Toyota –better suited to the conditions – managed to upset the running order as he scampered past into second place. But the race ended for Ash with a fine podium third place – and vital points. What a huge-pressure achievement for Ash while championship rival Turkington finished down in 15th slot.

Ash, sporting racing number 116, started the first race with a 10 point lead over Turkington but saw his Levorg's lead extended to a healthy 24 points after race one.

In fact, in the last few laps Ash was right under the rear wing of the Toyota and team boss Scott had to ask him to ease the pace. Gaining second place wasn't worth the risk of throwing the championship away!

Warren Scott said: "A 24-point difference is more than a race win. So despite Ash's natural race-driver instincts to gain a place, it was sensible

...THE DECISION HAS TO BE MADE TO RISK GOING OUT ON SLICKS, OR TO PLAY MUCH SAFER WITH WET CONDITION TYRES.



## BTCC FINAL RACES

to be a little bit cautious in the last few laps.” However, 44 points were still up for grabs with just two races to go...

In the pit garage was Subaru sales boss, Paul Tunnicliffe, trying to remain calm and controlled. But even his nerves were being tested. He said: “We’ve been here before and had our hearts broken. We still have to get to the end of the day.”

Pit garages 7 and 8 – home for the day for the racing Levorgs – were getting busier and busier as fans, reporters and Press photographers jostled for position to get a closer look at the drivers and the TV lap boards. So no pressure for the Adrian Flux Subaru Racing team then!

Celebrations at the end of the first race were slightly muted as Subaru fans knew that there was still the opportunity of an upset with two more races to go. For the next hour or so there was a steady stream of visitors to the team’s garage, all eager to get a glimpse of the workshop and the drivers before the start of race action in the afternoon.

Race two saw a peep from the sun. Only a teasing glimpse – but at least the track was pretty much dry. Even Paul Tunnicliffe relaxed a little – “Almost any result now will do for us, we just need to get the car home safely.”

But of course he knew that racing in the BTCC is never quite that simple. For a start, one of the foibles of BTCC racing is that drivers who do well in the first round get not only the congratulations of the fans, but a weight penalty from the championship organisers to carry into the next race!

From the start of race two Ash was carrying 57kg of extra ballast. For a racing car, even one

as good as the Levorg, that is a real penalty as weight equates to lost seconds per lap in this high-pressure racing formula.

While everyone else may have had the jitters, Ash remained focused, professional and seemed totally calm as he sat on the line in third place on the second row of the grid. Meanwhile, his main championship rival, Turkington, was way back on row eight in 15th slot.

But a walk-in-the-park race two certainly wasn’t! The expressions on the faces of the mechanics, fans and Subaru staff would go from fairly relaxed to hugely tense during this dramatic race.

Turkington, starting in 15th place, had the race of his life as he surged through the pack in his BMW from the word go. With no additional weight ballast, the double BTCC championship winning driver was up to 12th place by the end of the first lap.

By lap eight he was on Ash Sutton’s tail as they entered Druids Bend and, credit to the Levorg driver for playing the game straight and not hindering Turkington’s charge, there was no unfair driving.

As Turkington surged towards the front, the utter disappointment on the faces of the team and fans in the Subaru garage was increasingly hard to hide. Many hid their faces in their hands as the BMW flew past while Ash had to think carefully about his tyres and the rest of the race.

Turkington took a deserved victory – truly a great demonstration of all-out committed driving. For Ashley, he had to remain sensible and finished the race in a very credible 12th place. But the hard won-24 point lead had now been slashed to just six points...

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...THE WORRY WAS THAT WITH CARS ALL OVER THE PLACE, HOW WOULD ASH EMERGE FROM THE MÊLÉE, ASSUMING HE WOULD EMERGE AT ALL.

Maddy Turner, the Subaru team PR, did her best to hide her nerves, as did all of the team in the garage. But tensions were beginning to reach new heights. Yet it has to be said that all of the team crew were going about their jobs with the utmost professionalism. And when Ashley got his car back to the garage after the cooling-down lap, Warren Scott was the first to give him a big 'man hug'.

While there was great admiration for Turkington's superb drive – ironically he drove for the Subaru team last year – there was plenty of praise from fans and the Subaru team for Ash's refusal to be panicked into doing anything stupid as he watched the Northern Irishman disappear into the distance in the last few laps of race two.

Now it was time to settle and plan for race three – the final race of the 2017 calendar with Ash now a mere six points in the lead. But, importantly, he would not be carrying additional ballast weight into the final race while Turkington would. However, the bizarre reverse-grid rule came in to play for the final race, just to add even more spice to the mix.

As the drivers lined up on the grid for the last race, the tension around the Subaru pit garage was unbelievable. Yet again, Ash displayed a professionalism which belied his youth and inexperience in BTCC racing. As one of the crew said aloud: "Now the boy becomes a man."

Warren Scott was doing his best to look calm. Paul Tunnicliffe summed it up best when he said: "You just couldn't have written a script for this."

The light was rapidly beginning to dim and there was a menacing drizzle at 5.14pm as the grid formed up. Nail-biting does not begin to describe the situation at the world-famous Kent circuit, which has seen many great driving spectacles down the years.

To add to the tension, most teams and drivers – including Sutton and Turkington – left it until the last possible moment before deciding which tyres to use for the final race. Again, parts of the track were reasonably dry, while other sections of the tarmac were wet and slippery.

The reverse grid line up had put Turkington on 10th and Ash Sutton immediately behind him in 12th. As they sat on the grid you got the distinct

## BTCC FINAL RACES



impression that Ash's Levorg was like a guard dog straining at the leash. But as soon as the lights went out, and the front rows pulled away, you could see the drivers with a too-heavy right foot had their wheels spinning hopelessly and cars slipping and sliding all over the track.

Both championship contenders started to make their way through the pack and, as Subaru fans looked on aghast, it looked as if Turkington was getting a better line and was pulling clear of Ash. Then disaster struck. Not for Subaru – but for the BMW driver!

Ironically, what happened was none of Turkington's doing. And again the Subaru fans could only look on in pain as the ultimate race drama unfolded and spectators around the circuit saw it all on the huge TV screens.

It was one of those instances where time appeared to stand still – the worry was that with

cars all over the place, how would Ash emerge from the mêlée, assuming he would emerge at all.

Tom Ingram's Toyota touched the Ford of Mat Jackson as the pack went through Graham Hill Bend on lap two. The nudge forced Jackson to run wide and he took a trip off the track. He managed to pilot his car back on to the tarmac, but then clipped the rear of Turkington's BMW.

At first everyone thought the collision had caused a puncture in the BMW, but as Turkington wrestled with his car it became clear that the contact had resulted in more serious damage. In fact, the rear suspension upright had been badly buckled – in effect the BMW was undrivable.

Gasps, anguished sighs and screams echoed in the Subaru garage as the drama unfolded. But there were no cheers of delight as racing fans realised that Turkington had been accidentally taken out while Ash Sutton stormed ahead with

the carnage growing ever-distant in his rear-view mirrors.

Within minutes Sutton had piloted his Subaru up to fourth place and, in effect, was already the 2017 Champion – the youngest champ of the modern BTCC era.

Ash could have simply cruised around for the rest of the race. But the Levorg still had plenty of legs and Ash, being a true racer, wanted to do better than fourth slot. By now race leader Rob Austin had pulled well clear as the rain began to fall heavier and the sky grew even darker. The cars were needing headlights on as they flew around the famous Grant Prix circuit in growing darkness.

Rob Austin crossed the line in first place in his Toyota, Jack Goff driving for Honda earned second spot and Ash, who had actually been told to take the last few laps cautiously, crossed the line



in third to the rapturous applause of BTCC fans who had witnessed an incredible final.

To quote the BTCC official commentary on the race: “Sutton’s season statistics of six race wins and a total of 14 podiums are testament to the speed and brilliance shown by the 23-year-old, and the huge crowd rose as one to welcome home the new BTCC champion.”

In a post-race TV interview Ash, at times fighting back tears, said: “Nothing can top this, nothing at all. I feel sick inside because of the buzz! I can’t thank everyone enough. Adrian Flux Subaru Racing have done me so proud this year.

“Whatever Colin Turkington was doing, I was just trying to match during the opening laps, so he didn’t get out of sight. There was a coming-together involving Colin. I got a radio call with the team saying he was out, and they told me to go and enjoy myself.

“I’ve always set targets throughout my career. In every championship I’ve been a part of, I’ve achieved my target. But to do what we wanted to do this year, it’s an unreal feeling. It’ll take a long time to sink in.

“Since the end of 2014, Warren has been the one that has taken me under his wing and he’s the one

who’s given me this opportunity and got me here today. What I did, I did for him.”

And so the victory celebrations, TV interviews, Press interviews, poses for photographs and hundreds of autograph signings began in a sea of excitement on the winning grid – and beyond – in what was a fantastic day for everyone involved.

Ironically, it was at Brands Hatch where the 2017 season started. At that meeting Ash Sutton didn’t score a single point. What a difference a season makes!

Ash had climbed onto the roof of his racing Levorg at the end of the final race and pumped the air in celebration. Afterwards he said: “For myself and the team this means absolutely everything, we have all worked very hard for this. It’s been a tough year for Subaru. Things haven’t always gone smoothly and we’ve had a lot thrown at us. But we’ve just kept picking ourselves back up and made the most of the Subaru Levorg, especially through the corners when we’ve lacked straight-line speed.

“I’d like to thank everyone who’s been behind me this year – to the team, Adrian Flux Subaru Racing, Subaru UK, the sponsors and the fans. I couldn’t have done this without you all. Thank

you for believing in me.”

Warren Scott, Team Principal, commented: “The championship title was always the goal and we always believed it possible. But to finally achieve it is just something else.

“We started off the season knowing that we had the best package on the grid with the Subaru Levorg. But we can’t take anything away from the team who have continuously fought to bring the car up to being competitive by the time the series got to Oulton Park. It’s from there we’ve been strong.

“Most people will probably say that we won the Championship with the great points scored at Oulton Park and Croft. But I truly believe the championship was won in races one, two and three, where our straight-line performance wasn’t what we wanted but, with the strength of the team and the drivers, we lost the fewest points possible to help keep us in contention to win the final.

“Ash certainly has been the star of the paddock this year. But we have always known that to be the case. He has a fantastic future ahead of him and one that we are very excited about.”

PAUL TUNNICLIFFE SAID: “EVERYONE AT SUBARU WOULD LIKE TO CONGRATULATE ASH ON WINNING THE TITLE AND ALSO THE TEAM FOR DOING A FANTASTIC JOB THIS SEASON. THE CHAMPIONSHIP WAS HARD FOUGHT AND VERY WELL DESERVED. WE ARE LOOKING FORWARD TO DEFENDING THE TITLE NEXT SEASON.”



**DUNLOP**  
MSA British Touring Car Championship

**DUNLOP**  
MSA British Touring Car Championship

**DUNLOP**  
MSA British Touring Car Championship

**DUNLOP**  
MSA British Touring Car Championship

**DUNLOP**  
MSA British Touring Car Championship

**IHG** Rewards Club

itv

**HiQ**

THE CALAIS WINE  
SUPERSTORE

BT SPORT

**DUNLOP**  
MSA British Touring Car Championship

**DUNLOP**  
MSA British Touring Car Championship

**DUNLOP**  
MSA British Touring Car Championship

**IHG** Rewards Club

THE CALAIS WINE

itv

**DUNLOP**

**IHG** Rewards Club

Brands Hatch





## A VISION OF THE FUTURE

### *New Australian base for Christian Vision in South-east Asia*

An ambitious apartment and office block development in Australia, which incorporates a new South-east Asia headquarters for Christian Vision, the charity founded in 1988 by Lord Edmiston, Chairman of IM Group, could also herald a new chapter in the story of

IM Properties' international expansion.

"IM Properties is the developer of the site, which we've had for some time," explains Lord Edmiston. "Outside of the UK, IM Properties has operated in France, Germany, Ireland and the USA. What's become

clear from that is expansion is best for us in English-speaking countries because the laws are similar and we understand the language. So this may be the beginning of something in Australia. At the moment it's just this one development. But what usually happens is

that if we do well out of this one project, we will go on to do some more.”

The development is a 12-storey tower block – the maximum permitted – in Maroochydore, 50 miles north of Brisbane on Queensland’s Sunshine Coast where Christian Vision opened its original South-east Asia base in a broadcast studio complex in 2002. The area also has special family links for Lord Edmiston. “My brother, Michael, who opened the Christian Vision offices in Maroochydore, lives in the area as does my sister, my daughter, my wife’s brother and all their families,” he says. “They all live within a 20-mile radius of the town.

“The new offices for Christian Vision will be much more appropriate for the work we’re doing in Australia and the Asia-Pacific region than our current offices,” he adds. “That work is Internet-based. All the operations that we have in China, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, the Philippines – and all we do in South-east

Asia – are run out of Australia. Our mission is to try to encourage people to share their Christian faith with people who are not of faith or people who may be of faith but are weak and wavering. We produce lots of programming – three-minute videos on subjects such as depression. People who have been depressed have found faith to be of great comfort and helped them.”

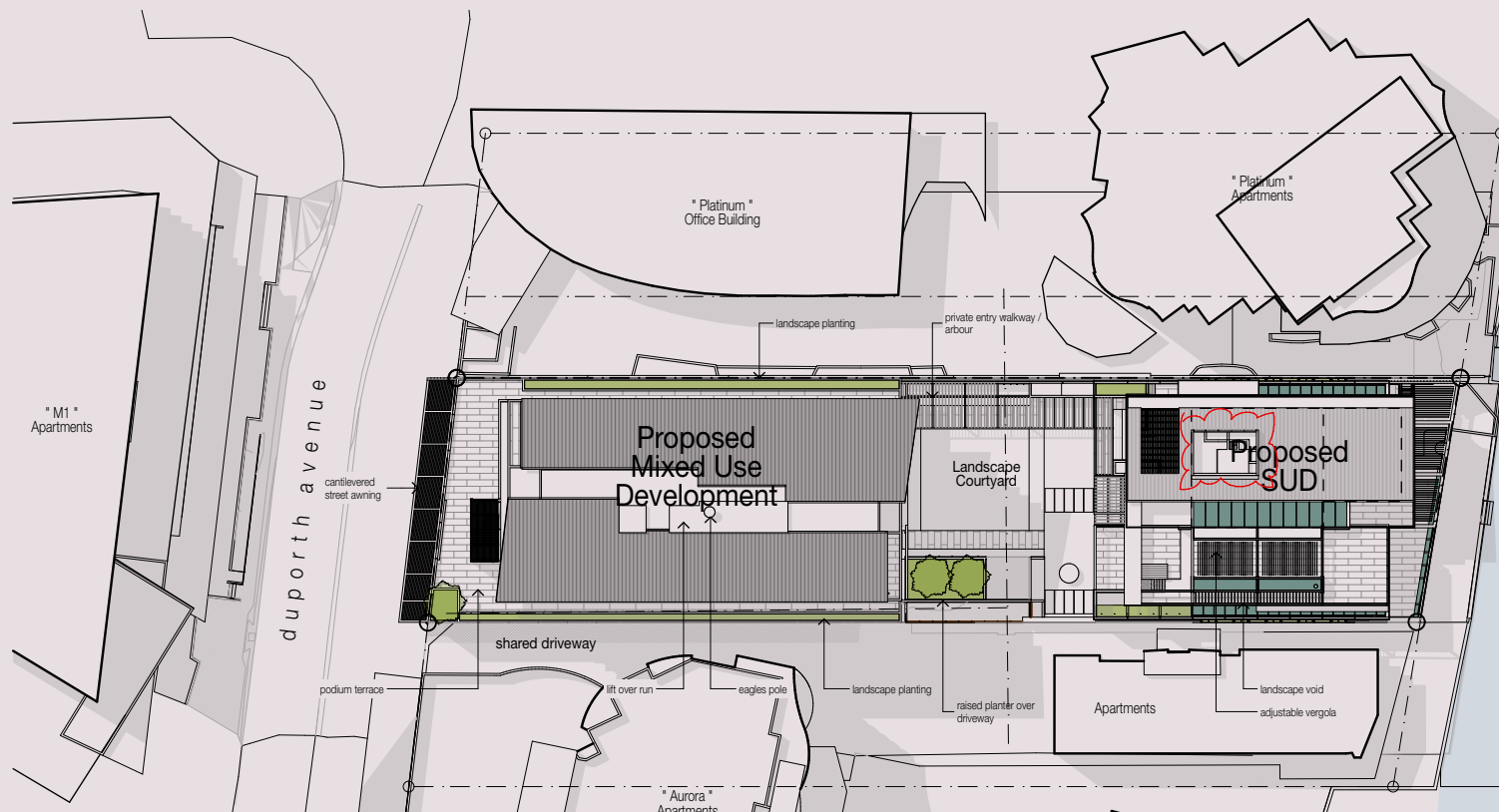
He says the website [www.cvglobal.co](http://www.cvglobal.co) gives a comprehensive picture of how the charity was started, those who run it and the world-wide work that it has done in the past 30 years and continues to do today. “It’s worth having a look at that.”

Lord Edmiston hopes the new development will be ready in 2019. “We’ve recently cleared the site – which we’ve owned for a few years – and will be going out to tender early in the New Year. All the planning applications have been done so I’m guessing it will be a couple of years before the development is completed. Because the site is close to the town centre and other tower blocks,

and is on the waterfront, there have been a number of factors we have had to take into consideration. However, we’ve overcome all the challenges – or we’ve made compromises here and there to accommodate the requirements.”

To raise the office and apartment floors of the waterfront block sufficiently to afford sea views, the ground floor incorporates a lobby and swimming pool. Above that are three floors of car-parking, then two floors of Christian Vision offices with the remaining floors home to apartments – two per floor.

Meanwhile, in a separate development, Lord and Lady Edmiston are privately funding construction of a new home in the same area, close to their family members. “We currently have an apartment there, but the house will provide far more substantial accommodation,” says Lord Edmiston.





# IT DEVELOPMENT WINS PRAISE FROM DEALERS

*by Tony Garuth*



**NICK FLAVELL AND PIETER STOKMAN**

A wide-ranging and comprehensive 110-question annual survey among car dealers in Nordic countries consistently shows the vast majority are dissatisfied with the 27 different distributors' IT systems. Poor user-friendliness, low cost-effectiveness and a lack of support for development of future systems are all criticised. But one of just two exceptions is Subaru whose dealers rated IM Nordic No 2 overall in the survey and indicated that they are 'more than satisfied' with the company's IT systems.

This comes as no surprise to Nick Flavell, IM Group's IT manager, and Pieter Stokman, head of IT for IM Nordic, whose teams have worked hard to overcome all the difficulties experienced by dealers and launch an all-new, web-based system that is easy to use, extremely intuitive and highly efficient.

Pieter, who joined IM six years ago, has dedicated the past five years to upgrading, in three distinct phases, the IT systems used for vehicle ordering, processing warranty claims and ordering parts. "The result," he says, "is that we seem to have the IT systems that are the easiest to use, we are the easiest to talk to, we have the best support and we are the most flexible in terms of usage, training and IT system processes.

"What have we done to achieve this? Well, we've moved from a Java-based, old-school style of ordering system to a completely new, web-based system which, to most users, is very easy to use, very intuitive and very natural. Jumping from the old environment to the new did a very good job in what had been a difficult area. In particular, dealers thought when ordering vehicles that the old system was difficult. We were getting a lot of calls to ask if they could order by telephone. But that's not very efficient. Taking orders by phone requires a lot of staff. So we wanted to change things so that all the dealers could easily order online. It was that single change that really boosted our score in the annual MRF survey."

However, Nick is quick to point out that it was a piece of work that Pieter did, pretty much on his own, that paved the way for the change to a web-based IT ordering system. "He created a brand-new Extranet to allow better communications with dealers. This went hand-in-hand with the new web-based ordering system. The Extranet allows us to ensure those bulletins and other communications all get to the right people. And, importantly, we can see that they have received those communications and opened them as there is an audit history to everything sent out."

With the success of the web-based vehicle-ordering and stock system, in Nick and Pieter turned their attention to upgrading the vehicle-warranty system. "Vehicle warranty claims and warranty processes are fairly complicated areas,"

says Pieter. “Among the many advantages the new system offers is the ability for dealers to upload photographs and other documents that will help to expedite their claim. Previously, such documentation would have to be sent by post or, at the very worst, regional managers would have to go out to dealerships to inspect vehicles. The new system efficiently speeds up the claims process, which results in increased satisfaction from dealers and from customers.”

Once the web-based warranty system had been successfully developed and launched, attention turned to the third phase of the IT upgrade – implementation of a web-based ordering system for parts. This has been under test with a number of IM Nordic dealers during 2017 who have given it a positive thumbs-up. As a result, the system was due to go live towards the end of the year.

Meanwhile, at the beginning of 2017 the Extranet that had been pioneered in IM Nordic – and all the many communications advantages it offers – was rolled-out to IM’s dealers in the UK and Ireland. At the same time, the web-based vehicle-ordering and vehicle-warranty systems were introduced across IM’s dealers in the UK and Ireland. However, Citroën dealers in Ireland will have only the Extranet, vehicle-ordering and warranty-ordering as parts ordering is undertaken direct with Citroën’s offices in Coventry via the French company’s own system.

### TIMELY ARRIVAL

When asked how he came to join IM Nordic, Pieter Stokman says he ‘slid across the company!’

“I’d been working in the car industry since I was 16, starting with polishing cars,” he says. “I had my own companies working within the automotive industry and always a little bit IT related. At one stage I became responsible for the Internet and IT with Kia in Holland, my home country. I built an Extranet for them. In 2007, I moved to Sweden. My wife is Swedish. I had my own company there selling children’s clothes on the Internet. Sadly, we didn’t really get that to work.

“Then, one day in January 2011, I was driving my car – slipping and sliding on the snow – past the Subaru offices, which got me thinking...

Everyone knows that Subarus are brilliant in all road conditions. So I went into the offices the next day and talked to Christer Blomdell, who is now the managing director. I told him that I’d always worked with cars and IT and that I’d like to get a job with IM.

“He told me to give him five minutes. When he came back it was settled! The following day he called me, said we’ve got your ticket ready, go to Birmingham and talk to Nick Flavell.”

According to Nick, Pieter’s arrival was timely: “The growth of IM Nordic meant it needed much more local IT support. The support they were getting was always UK-based and distant. As the company grew and the number of people grew there was obviously a need for more local IT support and Pieter met that need.”

### SUPPORT APPLAUDED

The results of the MRF survey are but one indication of the success of the new IT systems as far as dealers are concerned.

Another has come from the dealers themselves in an unexpected – but much-appreciated – way. Niklas Gustafsson, Service Manager for Subaru Nordic, explains: “In May this year we conducted a large after-sales event. When we explained what we had done during the past 12 months to help our dealerships, we got a lot

of positive feedback for the pre-warranty approval (PWA) system and consolidated credit notes.

“It was the first time that an audience has ever given us applause during a presentation. It more than underlined the excellent scores in the MRF survey. I’d like to thank Nick Flavell, Pieter Stokman and the IT teams. Without their support we would not have done so well in the survey or received the applause from our dealers.”





# IM PROPERTIES SURGE WAY AHEAD OF THE MARKET



**TIM WOOLRIDGE**  
MANAGING DIRECTOR

**IM PROPERTIES MANAGED GROWTH WITH EMPHASIS ON THE DEVELOPMENT SECTOR, WHICH HAS SEEN IT MOVE AHEAD OF ITS PEERS IN RECENT YEARS, ESTABLISHING IT AS ONE OF THE MARKET-LEADING PROPERTY COMPANIES OUTSIDE OF LONDON, REPORTS CHARLES MILLER**

While real estate returns in the UK have decreased, IM Properties has driven its global turnover up by £14 million to £178 million during 2016, achieving pre-tax profits of £58 million. That remarkable improvement is expected to be followed by another impressive performance this year.

Alongside its UK activities IM Properties is now becoming a force to be reckoned with in the development-funding markets of Mid-America, having opened a Chicago office in 2015 from which it oversees a portfolio of projects with a projected end-value in excess of \$400 million.

A cash war chest of circa £150 million, generated from property sales secured during an exceptional 2015, has given IMP the liquidity and fire-power to invest in projects offering a solid income return and allocate sufficient funds for its booming development pipeline.

IMP is therefore able to react extremely quickly to opportunities, knowing that it has a rock-solid reserve. The division has now built up a strong pipeline for the future with the value of property under construction and stock, alongside work in progress, increasing by £91 million to £279 million.

Tim Wooldridge, IMP's managing director said: "We've strengthened our in-house project delivery team, so we are able not only to invest in, but also deliver highly complex commercial and residential projects. A prime example of this in 2016 was 55 Colmore Row in Birmingham, which saw a Grade II listed building completely remodelled, bar its facade, to deliver 160,000 sq ft of prime, Grade A commercial space in the city centre.

"Our residential division, Spitfire Bespoke Homes, which focuses on homes in prime locations, also enjoyed rapid expansion with turnover increasing by 101% to £53 million. We see this as an important element of the business going forward and we will continue to invest in the development of the brand.

"IM Land has a development pipeline of over 12,000 plots providing a balanced portfolio of medium- and long-term projects which, following successful promotion through the planning system, will deliver phased development land with a value in excess of £1 billion."

He concluded: "We move at a very fast pace

and it's exciting to be involved and have the balance sheet to seize opportunities. Our focus on the development side in 2017 is a strategic one, but we also have to balance this with the essential requirement to maintain a consistent income return from the business."

What sets the IMP approach to land and property apart is a combination of positive, adventurous outlook and the ability to move much quicker than, for instance, a large institution limited-liability company. In addition, every one of IMP's projects has something special to it – they are never run of the mill.

In one of the more recent transactions, which offers a prime example of the IMP approach, Gymshark, the holder of the Fast Track 100 award for Britain's fastest-growing private enterprise, is about to open for business on IM Properties' flagship Blythe Valley Park.

The gym-wear firm, started just five years ago by fitness fanatic Ben Francis, has had a phenomenal growth and now sells in 170 countries worldwide. In fact, Gymshark grew so rapidly that it was soon clear that the company needed far more space than was available at its old Redditch location.

It signed a 10-year lease for a huge 42,408 sq ft two-storey office at Blythe Valley Business Park making it the largest letting deal for offices on the M42 corridor in the past five years. Gymshark certainly needed space to expand. Annual sales for the company this year are expected to be around £42 million.

But space alone wasn't what attracted Ben Francis and his team to Blythe Valley. He said: "I was so excited about what we could do here and about Blythe itself, I just couldn't wait. The location is perfect, set within a 122-acre country park. It's close to West Birmingham, which is home to us, yet we can be in London in an hour or Manchester in 90 minutes. And we're right by the airport too.

"I want this to be the best office building, in the best location, to attract some of the top talent to continue to propel the company forward. It's ideal for a fitness brand with a Virgin Active Gym on site and a focus on Wellness at Work."

Gymshark will have around 150 staff when it starts its operations at Blythe in March 2018 but will have room for more than 600 as the firm



"WE UNDERSTAND ATTRACTING TALENT IS REALLY IMPORTANT TO BUSINESS. WE HAVE INVESTED SIGNIFICANTLY AND NOW OCCUPIERS ARE BUYING THE WHOLE EXPERIENCE, NOT JUST THE BUILDING."

continues to rapidly grow. Ben Francis added: "The quality of building and environment at Blythe Valley matches our ambitions as a business.

"We're going to have huge chill-out zones, with 'napping pods', exciting food in a custom-built café and a cinema room. The 11,000 sq ft space for that alone will be bigger than our last offices. We want to create modern, flexible working space that works for our team."

The premier business park had already attracted two 15,000 sq ft prelets from Prologis and Rybrook Holdings and seen business advisers and accountants, PKF Cooper Parry, and global healthcare company, Abbott Global, both relocate to Blythe.

Planning has also been granted for Connexion, a £26-million IMP investment to provide a campus of five prime units, bringing forward 209,000 sq ft of premium industrial space within the site.

IMP's asset manager, Rob Hemus, said £3 million had been invested on refurbishing the Trigen building which will form Gymshark's new HQ. He said: "Purely as a property deal, it stands out as one of the largest lettings. However, it's also great to see Ben and his colleagues so in-tune with our philosophy.

"We've had a big push to make Blythe Valley more than just a workplace. We're set in 122 acres of country park. We have a gym, a nursery an independent coffee shop and a regular programme of tenant-focused events, including a Wellness at Work campaign. We've even put in routes for walking meetings.

"We understand attracting talent is really important to business. We have invested

significantly and now occupiers are buying the whole experience, not just the building. Blythe offers the work/life balance that so many companies are looking for. All of this on top of the connectivity of the site to airports, train stations and major motorway networks makes Blythe Valley the perfect fit for Gymshark and their aspirations as a business."

Argos, one of the UK's leading digital retailers, has set up its new sustainable logistics building in IM Properties' new Hub 69, electricity cost-neutral building (ECN) just north of Birmingham city centre at The Hub in Witton, a 90-acre business park.

The 69,296 sq ft building uses the combination of photo-voltaic panels with cutting-edge battery technology to achieve an A+ energy performance certificate (EPC) and the potential of zero-electricity bills.

IMP's UK development manager, Rachael Clarke, believes the Hub was the perfect opportunity to deliver its first ECN building.

She said: "When we acquired The Hub we believed it was the ideal site for 'last-mile delivery' given its proximity to central Birmingham and the local and major road network. We wanted to lead the market on the sustainability agenda and we are very pleased to see our first building adopting the innovative use of photo-voltaic panels and next-generation battery technology going live."

The battery technology used can be solar charged, or charged from the grid when electricity is cheaper to use in a process known as peak shaving.

Construction company, Benniman, is working on the £4-million investment by IM Properties

into its Birmingham Road Retail Park in Bromsgrove town centre. It is expected to be completed during the first half of 2018. Benniman will work on reconfiguring and enhancing the existing 53,000 sq ft of retail space to offer a more flexible, customer-friendly experience.

Richard Sykes, development manager from IM Properties, said: "From our perspective, Bromsgrove offers us a great opportunity to expand our retail portfolio and deliver a significantly improved retail offer for the town centre."

IMP went on a £10.5 million shopping spree in Leamington Spa, acquiring several prime retail assets in the town's main regency boulevards.

Buying up blocks in The Parade and Warwick Street, opposite the entrance to the Royal Priors Shopping Centre, and a further site in Guy Street, the 31,227 sq ft of retail space is home to some of the town's largest national retailers.

Harry Goodman, IMP's asset manager said: "Leamington town centre had been on our radar for a while. It's an affluent town, with an appealing mix of major national retail brands and independent boutiques.

"We see a lot of opportunity to add further value and character to the assets. We're already in talks with some really strong and exciting new operators who are looking to take up the small amount of vacant space available."

Leamington recently announced plans for a £50-million redevelopment of new council headquarters to create a major new gateway into the town centre, stimulating the local economy. More than seven million people visit Leamington's main retail streets every year.



SPITFIRE  
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## SPITFIRE HOMES

UK

*No matter which style of home designed and built by Spitfire Bespoke Homes is your choice, unique qualities and characteristics come as standard. That's the message from this eye-catching advertisement that also highlights the prestigious awards won by the company. Architecture that is sympathetic to the location's surroundings is another of Spitfire's hallmarks.*

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Whether we're creating a chic contemporary townhouse, a characterful Cotswold home or a classic mansion, all of our homes share the Spitfire signature; the unique qualities and characteristics that ensure that elements of your home are truly distinctive. We do this by the careful selection of the external finishes and internal specification, sometimes to provide an architectural contrast or statement, and sometimes to create a home that's sympathetic to its surroundings.

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**AWARDS 2017**  
WINNER  
Housebuilder  
of the Year





# RECORD RENTALS AT TOP BUSINESS ADDRESS IN *Birmingham*

*Near-record commercial rentals have been achieved at the most fashionably up-market office complex in Britain's second city, which IM Properties completely redeveloped in an astonishingly ambitious project. The showpiece Georgian listed building at 55 Colmore Row, in the heart of Birmingham's professional business sector, underwent a meticulous redevelopment by IM Properties at a cost of £30 million. It injected new life into an historic building – but which had been rapidly fading and beginning to look quite shabby.*

Many pundits in Birmingham's commercial property sector were surprised when IM Properties stepped in and bought the offices in one of the most prominent positions in Birmingham city centre for £34 million.

Two-and-half-years on from purchase, following a massive redevelopment programme, which included the sympathetic addition of two storeys and the removal and replacement of the whole rear façade, the huge project opened on time and on budget in February 2017.

Now IM Properties' ambitious, if not audacious, plans have been fully validated with new benchmark rents and top-class commercial tenants. The attraction of the showpiece offices has been so strong that the take up of office space is well ahead of target.

John Hammond, UK investment director of IM Properties, is justifiably proud of the project. The quality of the finished article has attracted rentals of £33 per sq ft. This has only been matched once before in Birmingham, during the property peak of 2005.

The latest rental agreements on 55 Colmore Row are above expectations and are some of the highest outside of London. John said: "I think that people have been blown away by the quality, in particular in the former banking hall.

"Nothing else in the city can compare to this. Office space can be quite generic. So it is what you do to the entrance and common areas which set you apart. Add to this, the location is 100 per cent prime. Whenever we meet a tenant we never have to sell the location. That is a given.

"The end result of the refurbishment was exactly what we wanted – a beautiful building which preserves the fine Victorian façade but, inside, it is light and modern with the listed banking hall turned into a glorious reception space. Every office and every floor is different, so nothing could be bought off the peg when we modernised the building.

"These days leading companies and professional firms know that they have to offer their very top people a great 'well-being/lifestyle' place in which to work. Hiring and keeping these

people is very competitive, so if you can offer them exciting, professional places to work from, then it's a huge plus factor."

Shortly after a gala opening in February, international law firm Pinsent Mason moved into 55 Colmore Row, taking 40,000 sq ft over two floors.

Greg Lowson, head of Pinsent Masons' Birmingham office said: "55 Colmore Row is a statement building with a huge sense of arrival and it really sets the tone for our business and the individuals that work with us. The offices have been designed as a modern open plan layout in order to truly embrace and support agile and innovative ways of working.

"To retain and attract the best talent, a first-class working environment and access to amenities is essential. Colmore Row ticks all the boxes and has everything you could need on your doorstep, coupled with a great sense of community and vibrancy, which I'm sure the team will enjoy."

Gaucha, the high-end restaurant group with venues in places such as Piccadilly, opened on the





## 55 COLMORE ROW



*Gaucha Restaurant*

lower ground floor of 55 Colmore Row in May. John Hammond said: “They had been looking for the right site in Birmingham for three years and this was the first new Gaucha to open in seven years; so clearly another indication of the quality of our building and the clients we’re attracting.”

Savills, the leading global real estate company, not only represented IM Properties on lettings for 55 Colmore Row but, in August 2017, also took 17,000 sq ft of office space for themselves. Savills has 700 estate agency offices throughout the world dealing in land and commercial buildings, but is largely known for up-market domestic properties. Savills paid £33 per sq ft on a 10-year lease for 55 Colmore Row.

More recently the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) took 30,000 sq ft over one and a half floors, again at a rental of £33 per sq ft, bringing take up of office space to almost two thirds of the total.

John Hammond said: “If you’re going to develop prime offices, you couldn’t be much better placed in terms of location than 55 Colmore Row. We always understood its potential and that’s why we invested so significantly to create the best offices in the city centre.

“Quality and location will always trump

the competition, although undoubtedly it was also a question of being in the right place at the right time. Colmore Row and the surrounding business district has enjoyed considerable growth and attention.

“We were delighted Pinsents and Savills decided to come here. But it is especially satisfying when the association which drives best-practice and the highest quality of professional standards into our industry also chooses us, and from a very competitive market-place.”

The last restaurant space within 55 Colmore Row is currently under offer with a specialist steak company considering the 8,800 sq ft on a 15-year lease.

John concluded: “Lettings are ahead of schedule, rents are higher than we anticipated and we have strong interest in most of the remaining space. When you look at the tenant mix it instantly tells you everything you need to know about 55 Colmore Row.

“Everything leads to quality – quality of product and location. And of course timing, let’s not forget that. We delivered a major redevelopment on time.”



# BUILDING A TOWN CENTRE AND A COMMUNITY



**IM executives are used to tackling huge challenges. But in the USA, policy on picnics came before a \$200-million project with the capacity to create hundreds of new jobs and provide a heart to a community... Robert Gould, IM Properties vice-president - US operations, gives a first-hand account of an enormous development that presented not just technical obstacles, but had to win-over the officials and residents of a traditional American town.**

He explains: “I had a lesson in how deep America’s sense of democracy goes almost three years ago when the Board of the Town of Brookfield voted and approved a Bond Sale for a \$29-million Tax Incremental Financing (TIF). This heralded the groundbreaking of a \$200-million-plus project- the Corners of Brookfield.

“The town is a small municipality of some 7,000 people on the western side of the Milwaukee metropolitan statistical area (MSA), which has a population of 1.6 million.

“The vote for approval of this huge project was taken in a small Town Hall and came hot on the heels of – but after – a series of votes approving picnic licenses in the park!” So how come a huge, regionally-important project came lower down the agenda than picnics? And why does a picnic licence require a vote anyway?

Americans vote for a plethora of officials in which they entrust many aspects of their lives but, crucially, reserve the right to remove them from office. They vote for their school boards, their sheriffs, their judges, district attorneys and even their tax collector.

Robert elaborates: “Local democracy is alive and well in the US and fiercely defended against incursions from the Federal Government. Whether at state, county, city, town or village level, power is not so much devolved to, but authorised by ‘We the people’. There’s a different code and ordinance around every street corner in the US as each municipality has wide powers of local governance.”

The Corners of Brookfield was a project that they had been working on for several years with the previous landowners and sponsors, the Marcus Corporation, the state, county and other agencies.

“Within the context of the size of the municipality, it was a huge project that would challenge a small team of officials and demand much consultation at a political level in many areas. Against this background, in conjunction with the town, we’ve had to deliver one of the largest and most complex mixed-use developments in the Mid-West since the global financial crisis. From our groundbreaking back in May 2015, it’s certainly had its challenges.”

Landlords had to become pro-active. ‘Experiential Retail’ in which landlords and tenants combined to offer an experience you couldn’t get delivered at home or ordered on your smartphone became the holy grail.

As Robert said: “Why would you want to go to a shopping center and get a zero experience, when you can shop from your armchair and get just that from your phone or tablet?”

To deliver the new experience required a number of factors including a vibrant tenant mix, relevant to consumer tastes. In many presentations to the Town Board during the development literally scores of items of approval were required. Robert consistently pursued a theme of wanting to capitalise on the design of the street pattern and central square to deliver a town centre with a heart, a town square with a sense of place and a desire to







**Here are just some of the staggering statistics that faced the development team and targets hit since May 2015:**

- 750,000 sq ft including 270,000 sq ft of retail outlets and a 140,000 sq ft Von Maur department store.
- 53 retail and restaurant units, every one differently configured.
- 244 apartments in two buildings on four floors overlooking the town centre. There are 14 different floor plans.
- 1,989 parking spaces, including 1,668 customer spaces with 1,154 weather-protected underground spaces plus 514 at street level. An additional 321 apartment spaces were specified at the mezzanine level.
- Final and Conceptual Town Board approval for the development of Phase 2, with a 45,000 sq ft Silverspot movie theatre.
- 19 acres overlooking the key I-94 and Bluemound Roads with 1.4 million vehicles a week passing by.

**The civil engineering side of the project was equally challenging. Again, the statistics are impressive:**

- 350,000 cu yards of soil had to be excavated and removed from site.
- 130 deep foundations called caissons had to be bored and cast in concrete.
- The whole development is constructed on a 600,000 sq ft Post Tension Slab – a special reinforced concrete slab – one of the largest in the USA.
- 162,000,000 lbs of structural concrete were used, equivalent to a 200 mile long sidewalk or the amount of concrete required to construct an 80 storey high-rise with 15,000 sq ft floors.

While all this engineering work was going on, Robert's team faced challenges from a completely different area – shopping habits. He explains: "Shopping patterns were changing rapidly. The development of online shopping, and the failures of some high-profile retailers meant that the whole industry of shopping centres had to change."

develop a sense of community.

So how was it achieved? Robert explained: “We’ve carefully selected tenants that offered something new and fresh in retail and restaurants. We selected new-to-market-brands along with regional favourites over stale chain stores that appear in every mall. Our tenants are relevant to modern tastes and on the whole embraced the internet. We’ve increased the target balance of restaurant and entertainment uses and this generated spectacularly successful restaurant openings and secured the highly prized Silverspot movie theatre, which will open in 2019.

“We positively encouraged the Town Board and wider community to consider The Corners as their ‘town centre’ – to put it at the heart of their community. To reinforce this we changed the branding from ‘The Corners of Brookfield’ to ‘The Corners – Town of Brookfield.’

“This was important because there are two Brookfields sharing the same name. There is a larger neighbour bordering to the east, The City of Brookfield, which has a population of some 40,000 people.”

Robert added: “The town had pride but no identifiable heart. So by providing a physical place, a town center, and branding it as ‘Town of Brookfield’ we developed a sense of community that had been overshadowed by its larger neighbour.”

The development is laid out with a street pattern and a market square that would not look out of place in an English market town. “We’ve even named streets, High Street, Market Street and Market Square,” said Robert.

“We’ve been helped and challenged by architecture. The town centre is built above a spectacular covered parking garage with 22 ft high ceilings. The car dominates traditional shopping patterns in the US and it’s no different here. Convincing the community to park and walk rather than parking outside their favourite store was at first difficult, but the development is a walkable scale

unlike many of the traditional covered mega malls in the USA, and people are enjoying it.

“The layout of the street pattern culminates in the Market Square, it gives people a place to gather, exchange views, eat, drink and be entertained. I knew we had to activate that sense of place, to make the heart beat.

“We have the potential for 244 families in the apartments so we went about providing a popular programme of events including live music, movie nights on a 20 ft wide video screen, parades, brass bands, tenant events and promotions, baseball and football games, charitable events, yoga and aerobics in the square.”

Social media was used to promote the events along with two huge highway screens (electronic message centres). Vibrant events were planned for the Market Square and agreed with the blessing of Town officials including specific town festivals and the highly popular Town Truck Day. The annual Christmas tree lighting and carol service was even moved from the Town Hall to Market Square, again with official backing.

The town also promotes events and emergency weather alerts on the highway video screens, so the town centre is active in community relations and information.

Robert concluded: “The key has been in developing good working relationships and a sense of trust between the project delivery team, town officials and politicians.

“Involving them has been key to developing a sense of community. Developing trust between all stake holding representatives requires time, pragmatism, integrity and the delivery of what we promised.

“This development is massive in scale for a small municipality. That was daunting, and I can imagine the politicians and officials constantly questioning whether they were going too far, as they were allowing us to break new ground in their community. Trust is hard earned and it takes time;

let’s not forget the development team hailed from England and Chicago. There must have been a sense of – ‘Who are these guys?’

“Trust has allowed officials, both administrative and elected, to support some of the creative and innovative initiatives we have taken in developing a town centre that provides a sense of community. And it seems as if the good people of The Town and Waukesha County like what we’re doing because a real sense of community is developing.

“Over the past three years we’ve moved on a little from playing second-fiddle to picnic licences! But there’s still more to do as towns and communities are not made in six months.”



# SPITFIRE CLIMBS TO RECORD SALES

High-flying Spitfire Bespoke Homes has the seven year itch. But it can't stop to scratch because the company is too busy picking up yet more awards!

It's seven years since the IM house builder was formed and the business has performed more like a super-fast jet as it has climbed from a turnover of £1.5 million to a record £100 million.

In November 2016 Spitfire collected the coveted WhatHouse? gold award, having been singled out as Britain's best small builder with both judges and property commentators heaping praise on Spitfire's achievements.

Since then Spitfire has gone on to collect so many gongs that its mantelpiece is buckling under the weight of yet more awards. At the important Insider Awards, Spitfire walked away with the Midlands Housebuilder of the Year honour and was highly commended in the Housebuilder Awards for Best Refurbishment for its redevelopment of Hall Farm at Knowle.

However, the Spitfire business is based

on far more than its impressive, and ever-growing, collection of awards. Many of Spitfire's properties are bought off plan as the reputation of the multi-award-winning company grows. The house builder has even had customers who have moved from one Spitfire home to another, vowing that they would only consider purchasing a house built by Spitfire.

High quality, attention to detail, fantastic locations and brilliant designs are all part of the winning formula – with quality as the outstanding hallmark of a Spitfire house.

It might seem like a world away from when David Jervis founded the business. However, it reflects perfectly the ethos of Spitfire. As David explained: "When we started out we wanted to create a brand that delivered different and special homes to the market.

"We didn't want to compete with the volume

builders. We wanted to create a mid- to top-end brand that would deliver something different – something that we considered didn't exist in the market.

"Every one of our schemes is individually designed and people who go to see our developments get the 'wow factor' that usually comes across very loud and clear!

"We aim to impress. Our quality shines through and each and every one of the homes we build has this in mind. That's what sets us apart and that is a key to our success. It's not something we just say – it's something we sincerely believe in."

David is proud of the quality in Spitfire homes. When the company first started it used contract builders, but for some time now the company has used its own workforce, all hand picked by David. And they all appear to share his infectious enthusiasm to





deliver the very best.

Spitfire has just won its first ever build-to-rent (BTR) business in partnership with Legal & General, a venture which he and the team are enthusiastic about. Legal & General has agreed the funding of a prime Birmingham development site known as Newhall Square for a total in excess of £50 million.

A forward-funding deal has been agreed with Spitfire for the development which has planning for 221 apartments and 7,500 sq ft of ground-floor commercial space, together with a public square and 61 car parking spaces.

Located centrally between Birmingham's established Central Business District and the retail-cum-leisure hub of the Jewellery Quarter, the site is a great location within the city centre and benefits from canal-fronting apartments.

There is currently more capital committed to infrastructure projects in Birmingham than any other European city. The site sits within five minutes' walk of the new Paradise development that will deliver 1.8 million sq ft of new office, retail and leisure space, generating 12,000 new jobs.

With a current population of 1.1 million, an increase of 100,000 people since 2004, Birmingham has the third fastest growth of any city in the UK, behind London and Bristol. It also has one of the youngest populations in Europe, with under-30s representing around 40% of the population. However, available housing stock is at a record low and is exacerbated by weak levels of

new house building in recent years.

Dan Batterton, BTR fund manager at LGIM Real Assets, said: "This development, in a highly-sought-after area of Birmingham, links the industrial heritage of the Jewellery Quarter with the modern business district. The location is ideally suited to high-quality, affordable and professionally-managed rental accommodation that can help to address the supply demand imbalance in the city.

"Spitfire was the natural partner to deliver this project as they are known for their design-led approach and have a track record of delivering outstanding quality homes across the UK.

David added: "As a specialist developer with a reputation for creating unique homes featuring great design and unrivalled attention to detail, we are excited to be working with Legal & General to bring our expertise and high standards to the BTR sector.

"We understand that renting is now a tenure of choice for many urban dwellers, and recognise that they have high expectations. The traditional buy-to-let market is being overshadowed by the purpose-built rental sector, which is refreshingly focussed on service, high quality accommodation and resident amenities.

"We can draw strength from our parent company, IM Properties, a widely respected developer of commercial and industrial properties. This is a prime opportunity for Spitfire Bespoke Homes to

make its mark on the BTR market and extend our offering to a section of the market which is befitting of our own approach to quality homes in great locations."

All of Spitfire's developments are special, and Jardin in the village of Binfield in Bracknell Forest is a prime example. It's an exclusive collection of 24 unique houses within a private estate in the original kitchen garden of Binfield House, an elegant Grade II listed Georgian manor house in the historic village.

Jardin drew architectural inspiration from the distinctive gothic façade of Binfield House, which dates back to 1776. The site still contains the property's historic walled garden, a lasting reminder of its grand heritage. Spitfire homes range from two to five bedrooms, and are traditionally styled in authentic red brick with elegant white window frames, cottage-style painted hardwood front doors and grey or brown tiled roofs to blend with the surroundings.

The idyllic village of Binfield is steeped in history, once home to the poet Alexander Pope and painted by one of England's greatest landscape artists, John Constable. The local pub, The Stag and Hounds, was said to have been a hunting lodge used by King Henry VIII and Elizabeth I. Binfield remains surrounded by parks and woodland and the Spitfire development is just minutes away from Billingbear Park Golf Club.







THE TRADITIONAL BUY-TO-LET MARKET IS BEING OVERSHADOWED BY THE PURPOSE BUILT RENTAL SECTOR, WHICH IS REFRESHINGLY FOCUSED ON SERVICE, HIGH QUALITY ACCOMMODATION AND RESIDENT AMENITIES.

All of the homes at Jardin boast an outstanding specification. Kitchens are individually designed, featuring Hatt units, quartz worktops and a full range of A-rated integrated appliances. Bathrooms feature Villeroy & Boch white sanitary ware with polished chrome fittings by Hansgrohe.

Prices at Jardin started from £399,950 for a two-bedroom home and interest in the development flooded in as soon as the scheme was announced. David said: "Building in this area is not normally welcomed, but we made absolutely sure that our designs were totally sympathetic to the surroundings."

Clevedon Hall Estate is a development by Spitfire in the pretty seaside town of Clevedon, North Somerset, which has a range of water sports available on the doorstep, and picturesque surroundings providing the ideal backdrop for long invigorating walks.

The first phase, Hall Garden, has been a sell-out success for Spitfire. It's part of a two-phase scheme within the beautiful grounds of the Grade II\* listed Clevedon Hall and within sight of the seafront. The Spitfire homes marry cutting-edge architecture with a mature country setting.

Clevedon epitomises contemporary coastal life, nestled between the Bristol Channel and rolling green hills. The recently revamped Marine Lake hosts regular activities by Clevedon Canoe Club, Clevedon's Sea Swimmers and Clevedon Sailing Club, and is also open for public use. Meanwhile, 'Poets Walk' is a beautiful circular coastal path

that is perfect for peaceful afternoon strolls, named after former residents Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Alfred Tennyson, who were both inspired by the stunning scenery.

Clevedon Hall Estate draws inspiration from Northern European and Scandinavian design, with an emphasis on space and light and a luxurious, minimalist finish.

Four-bedroomed homes at Bay Green, on the second phase of the development were priced from £780,000 to in excess of £900,000.

Spitfire never shies away from looking at potential sites which many other developers would immediately dismiss as being too ambitious. One example is in the heart of the picturesque Cotswold village of Broadway, set within the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and often referred to as 'the show village of England.'

The Cotswolds AONB is a grand landscape with a rich history boasting excellent examples of Tudor, Stuart and Georgian architecture, which has made it such a sought-after place today. In this distinct setting, a prestigious collection of 124 new homes from Spitfire is being built.

Highworth is set in the heart of Broadway and is in two distinct parts, naturally divided by retained field hedges. It has sweeping views of Willersley and Fish Hill and the famous Broadway Tower, a castle designed by the renowned architect Capability Brown.

Each of the Spitfire homes has traditionally styled façades with Cotswold stone detailing,

in keeping with the architectural style of the surrounding area. The development of two, three, four and five-bedroom terraced and detached homes all enjoy access to feature squares and open spaces for residents. Prices at Highworth started from £340,000 for a two-bedroom home to in excess of £1,000,000 for five-bedroomed homes.

David said: "Again, it is all about building high-quality homes within truly great settings, but always ensuring that what we build looks entirely at ease with the surroundings while giving people great places to live."







# ISUZU HELP WELSH DRAGONS

ROAR

*“Rugby is an intrinsic part of Welsh life, and we are delighted to become associated with an institution which shares our values of dependability, toughness and commitment.”*

*Paul Tunncliffe*



**ISUZU NEVER DO THINGS BY HALVES – SO IT’S NO SURPRISE THAT THE NO-NONSENSE BRAND HAS SCORED A RECORD IN ONE OF THE TOUGHEST SPORTS IN THE WORLD. IT HAS TEAMED UP WITH THE WELSH RUGBY UNION AND SIGNED A HUGE SHIRT PARTNERSHIP DEAL IN A SPORT THAT IS CLOSER TO A RELIGION IN THE PRINCIPALITY THAN A MERE GAME.**

Under the deal, Welsh RFU players will wear the Isuzu logo on their shirts for the next four years to give Isuzu incredible exposure to the millions of passionate fans of Welsh rugby.

Rugby may have been invented on the playing fields of a posh public school in the English Midlands, but pundits of the sport will tell you that only the Welsh play the game with the grit, determination and fire that marks out every individual player who pulls on the famous Welsh jersey.

It’s these great characteristics of strength, power and rugged toughness from the Welsh team that fits so perfectly with the hallmarks of the Isuzu brand.

Just consider the merits of Isuzu’s D-Max pick-up: they are strong and powerful in all conditions; tough, reliable and dependable; capable after being tried and tested and thoroughly trusted; durable and built to last. Now visualise the Welsh national rugby team facing the All Blacks or South Africa on a cold, wintery night in the awesome surroundings of the Principality Stadium in Cardiff. See the connections!

The enlightened Welsh RFU was convinced of the amazing similarities of the two iconic brands when it made the initial approach to Isuzu. Paul Tunnicliffe, Isuzu’s boss in the UK, recalls the initial approach and realised the synergy was perfect. He said: “The argument just couldn’t be faulted as both sides matched so well.

“But our initial worries were that such a fantastic deal might be way beyond our budgets. We just don’t have pockets as deep as the likes of Ford, Nissan or Toyota. However, the Welsh contingent had approached us, not the other way round!”

Many hours of prolonged negotiations eventually produced a deal with which both sides were delighted – and one that would certainly go down well in the valleys!

Paul added: “Welsh rugby touches the whole country, and not just one section of the community. It’s a grass roots sport, with most towns boasting their own clubs, supported by everyone.

“Wales is also a largely agricultural country, so a great fit there too. There is something no-nonsense about the Welsh, a characteristic they share with Isuzu. Only the WRU works for Isuzu, as the other countries’ image, target audience and appeal are not nearly as aligned. The more we thought about it, the more perfect the match.”

Overall it’s the sheer ruggedness of the Welsh game that formed the perfect match for Isuzu. Paul emphasised: “It’s exactly that – the shared values are fitness for purpose, rugged durability, unpretentiousness.”

From a commercial point of view, just what does Isuzu get from this historic deal?

In short, the instantly recognisable Isuzu logo will be on the shirts and shorts of both the Welsh men’s and women’s teams. Plus perimeter board advertising, access to players/staff, not to mention tickets to all games. There is also one game each season that will feature Subaru branding as part of the deal. This year it was Wales v Georgia.

In 2017 alone there were some mouth-wateringly great games for Wales and Isuzu, including taking on the Aussies on November 11, the All Blacks on November 25 and South Africa on December 2. Early in the New Year the Six Nations’ Tournament will see Wales in the thick of it – with their Isuzu logos proudly on display for fans across the world to see.


Away from the stadium the agreement will see ever more Isuzu exposure. Isuzu D-Max vehicles are being provided for the RFU’s community department, which reaches out across the whole of Wales. So what a sight the D-Max pick-ups will be when a Welsh RFU official or player turns up at a







# ISUZU



local school or college and out of the cab steps a Welsh hero.

The highly-respected Welsh development team will all drive D-Max vehicles and they play a major part going out to the community to cement the link that Welsh people have with rugby.

Isuzu will also receive a supply of tickets to games (form an orderly queue!) and experiential opportunities at the Principality Stadium.

Paul can be very pleased with having pulled off a sensational deal. He said: "Our main objective is simply to make the Isuzu brand more famous. We compete with mega global brands – Ford, Toyota, Nissan, but, as a company, we are dwarfed by them.

"This deal cannot achieve everything overnight. But it will expose the brand to a new audience and make us look grander than we currently are. The other teams are sponsored by massive brands – BT, O2, Vodafone – so we are in great company. We are not suddenly trying to target anyone new, just making ourselves more famous, and more serious.

"The deal with the Welsh RFU is all about branding, so our dealers in England, Scotland and Ireland will also benefit as rugby fans from throughout the UK and beyond will see the Isuzu name emblazoned on shirts in the international clashes."

George Wallis, Isuzu's marketing communications manager, added: "From a marketing perspective this agreement doesn't just make sense, it's a textbook merger of two institutions that each have lots to gain from it. It's a marketing win-win!

"We're hoping that everyone in the company and connected with the Isuzu brand really gets behind this, enjoys the spectacle of the Welsh team on TV and really enters into the spirit of this landmark agreement."

And who couldn't fail to be excited to watch the red-shirted Welsh team in full flow, with just that extra bit of support from the toughest pick-up on the market.

Martyn Phillips, the WRU's chief executive, was hugely pleased with the Isuzu sponsorship. He said: "We are delighted to welcome a company of the size, stature and international renown of Isuzu.

"Their investment in both the women's and men's national sides and the community game will be instrumental to the growth and sustainable future of the game in Wales.

"In terms of the Isuzu partnership alone, this is the biggest jersey collaboration in the history of our national game."

Welsh rugby stars, Jonathan Davies and Keira Bevan, gave the Isuzu shirts their first public outing in the early autumn. But not





on the rugby pitch, instead they went to the dramatic Black Mountain Pass, high in the Brecon Beacons – where SAS candidates are put through their paces to see if they are tough enough to join the elite force. They got there, of course, in Isuzu D-Max trucks.

The Brecon Beacons are acknowledged as one of the toughest natural places in Britain – but for the D-Max it was a virtual walk in the park.

The road trip headed north from Cwmgors Rugby club, up the A4069 and along ‘Top Gear road’ - so called due to the infamous TV show’s liking for it as a filming destination - was deemed the ideal way to bring the whole concept to life.

Davies, who embodies Welsh rugby but was actually born in Solihull, not too far from the IM Group’s headquarters, said: “Isuzu is a global brand and having them sponsor the Welsh Rugby Union will be a good partnership leading into the Rugby World Cup in particular. Wales XV women’s wing, Keira Bevan, agreed. She said: “These are exciting times and I’m just glad to be a part of it.”

Davies and Bevan’s trip included a visit to Gareth Edwards’ country at Cwmgors RFC, where Wales’ greatest player is president.





# CHINA

DRIVES DOWN

# ELECTRIC AVENUE



## BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

**CHINA IS LEADING THE WORLD IN THE QUEST FOR CLEANER AIR QUALITY AND THERE IS A SURGE IN RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND THE DELIVERY OF ELECTRIC CARS. IM'S BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT TEAM IS RIGHT AT THE CENTRE OF THESE FAST-MOVING CHANGES IN THE WORLD'S LARGEST CAR MARKET.**



The incredible development of the car market in China in the past two decades in particular has had repercussions. It has helped accelerate China from a largely rural economy to the second-largest global economy and the world's largest car market.

But there have been negatives – anyone who has visited a large Chinese city in the past few years will be familiar with the air quality, especially in the summer. Cities such as the capital, Beijing, along with Shanghai and others have seen their road systems transform from the era of bicycles, and sometimes rickshaws, to multi-lane highways with tens of thousands of cars. However, encouraged by the Chinese government, 'clean' all-electric and hybrid-electric cars are being rapidly developed.

Martin Dalton, IM's business development director, sees these radical changes as tremendous opportunities. He said: "The push for ever-cleaner vehicles worldwide is presenting problems for the major vehicle manufacturers. But it is opening the door for younger, and potentially more-agile, manufacturers.

"China is seeing massive growth in the sales of pure electric and plug-in hybrid-electric vehicles, but profit margins are under pressure for the manufacturers as they struggle to reduce component costs."

China will introduce a 'carbon credit' system in 2019 where 10% of a car manufacturer's sales must be 'new energy' vehicles. This rises to 12% in 2020.

Martin explained: "The Chinese government is determined to drive down pollution. Under particular scrutiny are cars and China has confirmed it will introduce a carbon credit system. This means manufacturers selling in China, whether local or international players, have to conform to avoid heavy fines and to ensure they retain their manufacturers licences. Without a licence their cars cannot be produced.

"China is already a leading electric vehicle market with 60,000 new electric cars going on the road each month. One major Chinese car manufacturer, with whom we are working, has announced that it will stop producing fossil-fuelled cars by 2025 and, by then it will have invested \$15 billion in its new energy strategy."

While some in the industry might be overawed by the scale and pace of change, Martin is excited and focuses on the positives.

He said: "Another exiting fact is that in recent years China has invested heavily in battery technology and manufacturing for vehicle use and for other heavy applications. Combined with the fact that China is sitting on most of the raw materials needed to make batteries, it puts it in

a very strong position as the world moves more towards new energy solutions.

"All of this means that our team will be very busy over the next few years working with new potential partners to try to make some of these prospects become reality."

The electric car drive in China, along with the expanding portfolio of other IM operations, has raised another issue. The IM team in China has outgrown its offices again!

IM opened its first office in central Beijing in 1999. Then, it had just one office with the entire China staff of 10 working there. However, the team fairly quickly increased to 55.

The expansion of the business promoted a move to a brand new office and, in 2015, a new base opened in south-east of Beijing.

Now the search is on for larger offices. Martin said: "We are running out of space again, so we are looking at moving into a new property that will give us flexibility to further-expand our business.

"The China business story is ever changing and challenging, throwing up obstacles but it also offers tremendous opportunities. One of the great advantages the IM business team has is that we thrive on these situations and are quick to react."



# IM IS POLISHING UP CHINA'S CAR IMAGE

Imagine a vast market for cars that has no history of after-care products. Does that spell opportunity for specialists in car cleaning and polishing products? IM Business Development thinks so.

China's new-car market has grown at a rate not witnessed anywhere else in the world at any time since Karl Benz created the world's first internal combustion-engined car in 1885.

Yet while sales of new cars has set records that seem eye-watering to traditional market leaders other aspects of the car market in China have barely taken off.

For example, that very British tradition of washing and polishing the car at the weekend has only just started in China, the world's largest car market. And therein lays a huge opportunity for IM, which holds the Chinese rights to the Autoglym brand.

During the past year great strides have been made in this aspect of IM's China operations. Having secured the rights to market this well-known Western brand, trying to persuade Chinese car owners to invest in Autoglym products has not been straightforward.

The Autoglym China business started in just the north-eastern provinces, where car ownership was quickly established. Martin Dalton, IM's business development director, reports that the operation has now been transformed from a regional distributor to a true national sales-and-marketing function.

He said: "We marketed the Autoglym brand by attending national shows, supplying major car care distributors as well as negotiating with large dealer groups and manufacturers. So 2017 saw an explosive growth of the distribution network with new prospects joining regularly."

All of this required a full reorganisation of the team and its operations. Patrick Zhang was appointed as general manager of the Autoglym China business and he formed a team to take

the business forward, with two major objectives: raising brand awareness and developing the distribution network.

Martin explained: "We attended two major auto accessory shows in 2017, one in Beijing in the north-east of China and the other in Guangzhou in the south-east. Both delivered quality trade contacts, many of which lead to good business. As a result of the shows, and through existing contacts at senior management level, we developed a great relationship with Aston Martin China who loaned us display cars and are now an Autoglym China customer.

"These shows were delivered on high-quality stands where our training staff gave product demonstrations on the Aston Martins. That drew in the crowds while the China sales team and UK Business Development staff members met and greeted potential partners. These shows gave us coverage in Chinese national trade media and on television."

Development of the distribution network is crucial for the business. During 2017, the Business Development team made headway in key areas, including major car valeting chains, accessory distributors, car manufacturers, national car distributors and major dealer groups.

Martin said: "Aside from Aston Martin China we are in discussion with a number of manufacturers and distributors to have our product used in their dealerships. We have also started supplying coating and supporting products to a major car dealer group.

"During the last nine months the team have appointed several distributors and are currently cultivating more, as well as supplying some very high-end volume car valeters.

"The car-care industry in China is going through major changes. The government is cracking down on pollution into waterways. So many small,

low-end product suppliers are under pressure to clean up their products while many car valeters are being closed because they don't have adequate water-treatment facilities.

"One of our appointment criteria for a valeting chain is that they have the relevant local authority permits for water treatment. Of course, all of Autoglym's products meet the stringent requirements coming into force that govern car cleaning products. More upgrades in legislation around the storage of chemicals during 2017 saw our Beijing office team having to look closely at our Autoglym warehouse contractor and appoint a new one with the latest permits."

Martin highlighted the support the IM Business Development team in China had received from Autoglym in the UK. "It's been outstanding, both in financial terms and the support in sending staff members to train and work with our team. I have to particularly mention Karl Heath, Autoglym International's technical services specialist, who is in China most months.

**"OVERALL, 2017 SAW GREAT PROGRESS. BUT WE RECOGNISE THERE IS STILL A LONG WAY TO GO. HOWEVER, GIVEN THE FACT THAT THIS IS A VERY UNDER-DEVELOPED INDUSTRY AND THAT CHINA HAS 220 MILLION CARS NOW ON THE ROAD AND 22 MILLION NEW ONES GOING ON THE ROAD EVERY YEAR - THE OPPORTUNITY FOR OUR AUTOGLYM BUSINESS IS HUGE."**



# NEW DAWN FOR IM NORDIC

*Interview with Christer Blomdell by Keith Read*



*While industry watchers see Christer Blomdell's appointment as Managing Director of IM Nordic the signal for a new dawn for the Sweden-based wing of IM Group, the new boss is promising evolution – not revolution. "It's slightly different for me coming in now because I have been on the Board for almost 11, years," says the 45-year-old former Finance Director who has taken over from Torbjörn Lillrud who has a new senior role within IM Group. "Because of that I feel a big part of where the company is now.*

## WILL THERE BE CHANGES?

"Yes, I see my taking over as offering the possibility to take some new steps. But, more than anything, I see them as being evolutionary much more than revolutionary. And when I say 'evolutionary' I do think that there are things we can modernise. The car market and the marketing landscape are changing all the time. Indeed, there are many areas where we have already started to evolve and are seeing the benefits to the business and sales. We have started to do much more with Facebook and other social media accounts where we can pinpoint age, gender, car-ownership etc. We do some of our commercials that way. Not only is it very cost-efficient but you are also able to reach the target audience that you really want. This is one example of how I see that we can do things in a more modernised way."

## WHAT ABOUT NEW POWERTRAIN VEHICLES FOR THE FUTURE?

"I have a very pragmatic stance on this," he says. "We have a lot of wishes for future products. But it remains very clear that what we have is what we need to sell. So instead of dreaming of what we could have had, we are enthusiastic about the fantastic products that we do have."

"Our task is to keep the dealers, and the

customers, enthusiastic about the products we have. And we'll do that by continuing to build the image of the cars' unique selling points, the safety, the durability, the possibility with all-wheel drive to go anywhere you like in any weather conditions – rain or snow, gravel roads or anywhere in the countryside. That is the image that we need to build because cars are getting more and more similar. There are not many 'bad' cars on the road today, so brand-building and image-building is getting more and more important."

IM Nordic participates in a lot of events with its dealers and customers in order to give people the opportunity to experience its cars. "It is absolutely vital that potential customers get in the car," maintains Christer. "We see a very good conversion rate if we get people to take a test-drive. Subarus really do grow on you. When I speak to customers they tell me they really love the car. That's a big help when it comes to customer loyalty and in Sweden we have the highest customer loyalty in the market."

## WHAT ASPIRATIONS DO YOU HAVE FOR THE BUSINESS?

"My most important aspiration is to continue growing the business, not only with Subaru and Isuzu but also by adding new brands and markets. When I talked with Lord (Bob) Edmiston and Andrew about taking over as managing director, I told them my ambition

was that in five to 10 years IM Nordic should be among the top private distributors in our markets with somewhere around 20,000 vehicles per year.

"I believe this is achievable because manufacturers need to free capital to do R&D work and develop new technologies. This has resulted in many of them selling off their distributorships, especially in non-core markets. While they might want to keep major European markets, I see Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland and the Baltic States as markets they might sell off to private distributors. Take PSA for example. They have sold off some of their distributorships in Sweden and Norway – as well as Citroën in Ireland to IM Group. PSA recently acquired Opel/Vauxhall, so there is a possibility that they might sell off those distributorships in non-core markets too. And there are other manufacturers who may well be looking to restructure their operations."

"Add to this the fact that in 2019/2020 the Chinese will arrive in Europe – and remember that we have good connections with Far East manufacturers. I see both European and Far Eastern manufacturers being a big brick in building a volume of 20,000 units a year. For us to build a good business it would be appropriate to have three volume brands – and I include Subaru as a volume brand for us. Three volume brands would spread our risk over time both from currency and drive-train perspectives. Looking long-term, I think we





should have Subaru plus two other volume brands, with Isuzu on the side. Pick-ups are not a huge market in Sweden, but they are a good complement for us.”

Christer hopes that future growth of the company will provide even more opportunities for the staff to develop. “With a larger volume and more brands there will be more opportunities to develop the people side of the business.

“One of the best things about working for IM is that with Bob and Andrew we are able to create our own future. I have never heard them turn down a good idea. So it’s up to us to bring the great ideas, and then go about doing them. It’s for us to decide what we are tomorrow... I don’t think you’d get that in any other distributor where the agenda is already set. Here, at IM, it’s a truly open road for us.”

Christer trained as an accountant and admits

he is an accountant. “But I don’t see myself as an accountant,” he insists. “I never really loved the accountancy side – I love the business side and analysing the business to see how we can make ourselves better as a result of things we learned from the analysis.”

### DO YOU HE HAVE THE ENTREPRENEURIAL FLAIR THAT IS A HALLMARK OF SENIOR IM EXECUTIVES?

“I have a good level of imagination and I see that as being a little bit the same as entrepreneurial flair. When I have an idea I want to do it and see the opportunities in it. If we have no hybrids, what’s our opportunity? Well, we have a more-simplified line-up; we

don’t need big investment in the workshop for the dealers; so let’s focus on what we have and see that as an opportunity.”

In reality, Christer can’t wait to have hybrids and EVs to sell. “Of course I’d love to have alternative power-train vehicles and, in time, these will come.” New technologies will, he says, present new challenges. But he is pragmatic about making the best from what is at hand. “By being part of the process of finding new brands and working with the Business Development team, what I’ve learnt is that nothing is as easy as it looks from outside... You should not look at someone else and think: ‘If only I had that, life would be so easy’. It’s never been the solution to have what everyone else has!”

## THE MOTIVATION

Motivating dealers will continue to be a key element of Christer's plans for future development of IM Nordic – a practice that has paid dividends many times over including, in the past year, with Isuzu dealers in Sweden.

Towards the end of 2015 IM Nordic took over distributing Isuzu in Sweden and increased sales show the acquisition has taken off very well. "Between 2010 and 2012, the previous distributor did 350 vehicles per year," says Christer. "In 2013 the new D-Max came along and, in 2013, 2014 and 2015, they did 450 vehicles per year. In 2016 – our first year, and with a four-year-old vehicle – we did over 600 units."

The key to the success was IM Nordic's relationship with dealers. "We motivated them and gave them

good conditions. For many years we have promoted a culture that says to have successful dealers they basically need three things – it needs to be easy for them to do business with us; doing business with us needs to be fun, and their business needs to be profitable. If we do easy, fun and profitable our dealers will fight together with us. It's a great ethos and you only have to think of the opposite. If it was very difficult, wasn't fun and was unprofitable, why would you want to do business with us?"

The move revitalised the Isuzu dealer network. "We changed a number of them, and we signed contracts with dealers in open points where we had none before," explains Christer. "Of today's 56 dealers, 30 are new."

That number is, he says, about

right. The task in the future is to further-develop those 56.

IM Nordic has also changed the way that Isuzu vehicles are marketed. "We put emphasis and focus on image-building, brand-building and building awareness which, I have to say, were quite low for Isuzu in Sweden. Building awareness is still our most important task."

Taking on the Isuzu distributorship added three new members of staff to the IM Nordic team which, today, stands at 57 people, four of whom are in Finland, two in the Baltic States and one in Denmark. A team of 10 operate in the warehouse with the remainder in sales and marketing, the service department, training, accounts and other administration departments.

## THE MARKET

Car sales in the Nordic markets reached an all-time high in 2016 with 370,000 units – 5,500 of which were Subarus. And figures for the first 10 months of 2017 indicated that the total market would exceed the 2016 record.

"In Finland the total market is about 105,000 and we sell 1,200 while in Estonia the market is about 24,000 and we sell 1,000," says Christer. "That is a particularly good market share. Latvia has a market of about 15,000 and we sell about 500. Lithuania has a market of about 24,000 and we sell 500 cars."

## THE MAN

Christer Blomdell is a family man – and Subaru is, for very personal reasons, part of the family. When he was head-hunted from Unilever 11 years ago and offered the position of Finance Director he went home and told his wife Anna, a marine biologist, that before he accepted he needed to drive a Subaru. "There was no way I wanted to work for a company whose cars I didn't like."

Despite Anna being very pregnant with their first child, the couple headed out to find a Subaru dealer and ask for a test drive. "Anna was so pregnant and concerned that the baby might arrive that she took a towel to place on the seat in case her waters broke while we were testing the car," he says. "Fortunately, our test-drive went well. I liked the car, so I accepted the job and, that very night, our first son – Joel – was born!"

Today, Joel has a brother, Malte, nine – and Christer is still driving Subarus!





# PROFILE OF MALMÖ

## HOME OF IM NORDIC

**DURING THE PAST EIGHT YEARS, MORE THAN 30 COMPANIES – INCLUDING IM NORDIC – HAVE MOVED THEIR HEADQUARTERS TO MALMÖ CREATING MORE THAN 2,500 JOBS AND HELPING SWEDEN’S THIRD-LARGEST CITY TO GET BACK ON ITS FEET AND RECOVER FROM TWO DIFFICULT DOWN-TURNS.**

The first blow to the once-dominant industrial centre was the closure in 1986 of Kockhams shipyard – the inevitable outcome of a recession that had hit Sweden in the mid-1970s. The second was the country’s financial crisis that struck a wounded nation, several times, in the early 1990s.

But stroll through the cobbled streets of the city-centre, where pavement coffee shops and restaurants nestle side-by-side with well-stocked shops and where pedestrians and cyclists go about their business with a confident calmness, and you feel the vibrancy of a city on the move. And, thanks to the founding in 1998 of Malmö University – and its subsequent steady growth – Malmö is a decidedly young city. Of its population of more than 300,000, almost half (48%) is under 35 years old. It is also an extremely cosmopolitan population with around 43% having a foreign background.

Adding significantly to the rebirth of Malmö was the opening in 2000 of the Øresund combined bridge and tunnel providing road and rail links between Sweden and Denmark. Previous links between the two countries had been by ferry boats across Øresund Water. Together, the road and rail crossings provide vital transport links and are the conduit for significant economic integration between Sweden and Denmark. Such is that integration that today, around 10% of Malmö’s population works in Copenhagen, the Danish capital at the western end of the bridge and tunnel.

Meanwhile, at the Swedish end of the bridge and tunnel, Malmö has witnessed a major transformation of its architectural developments that have attracted the arrival of new biotech and IT companies. A prime example is the growth and success of the city as a centre for computer-game development. Games like Candy Crush and Smash Hit – both developed by Malmö-



## STEFAN KLIMM

If the authorities in Malmö wanted to find an ambassador for their city they need look no further than Stefan Klimm, IM Nordic's warehouse manager. Stefan was born in Malmö almost 40 years ago and is intensely proud of his home-city. "I love Malmö because you are close to everything," he says. "It's not a big city, but you have in the area Copenhagen as well as Swedish cities such as Lund and Helsingborg.

"In the past 10 to 15 years Malmö has started to grow with new companies and new buildings. I particularly like what they are doing in the city centre, which has been freshened up and where there are new buildings together with the well-preserved older and original buildings.

"My city is historically famous for its parks and they remain a huge attraction today for residents and visitors. In recent years, Malmö has started to become better-known for its night-life – good clubs and restaurants. The city is definitely getting better and better, not least because of the university, which is growing every year and which has lovely buildings. The university population also helps to make Malmö feel a much-younger place and that's one of the reasons why the night-life has grown."

Today, Stefan – who has been with IM Nordic for almost two years – and his wife and two children live on the outskirts of the city. "But it only takes us about seven minutes to drive into the centre," he says. "We're really close to the city I love, but in a quieter location."

based companies – have achieved more than 100-million downloads worldwide.

Another indication of the rejuvenation of Malmö comes from recent statistics, which show that around seven new start-up companies are registered in the city every day. And while many, like IM Nordic, are relatively small in comparison with the vast shipyards that once lined the city's waterfronts, together they offer jobs and economic optimism.

Malmö still has two industrial harbours. One is still in daily use and is noted for being the largest Nordic port for the importation of cars – a vital requirement for IM Nordic and one of several reasons why, in 2013, the company moved 50 miles south from its former base in Helsingborg to Malmö.





# NEW HOME FOR IM'S OPERATIONS IN IRELAND



SIMON REED



CHRIS GRAHAM

Negotiations are at an advanced stage to build a bespoke new Dublin headquarters for IM's Citroën and Subaru operations in Ireland. The move follows an initial search for leased accommodation. However, with the Irish property market showing promising recovery following a very significant and well-recorded financial recession, a decision to opt for a freehold site and building has been taken.

Simon Reed, IM Properties' man responsible for EU investment and operational properties, says a number of other positive factors also influenced the decision to buy. "The Republic of Ireland property market is, after very dramatic falls in value, on the way back. The advantage of buying the freehold is that whilst the purchase price might include a bit of a premium, in return we receive a brand-new facility, built how we want it and in a great location for both our existing staff and Citroën's requirements. Values should continue to lift – and the Dublin market is quite dynamic."

Sites being considered are typically close to important junctions on Dublin's M50 motorway ring-road from which the building, with prominent signage, will be visible. It is planned to accommodate a flagship DS Automobiles Salon – likely to be operated by a third party – on the ground floor with IM's Citroën and Subaru distributorship headquarters and staff using the upper floor.

The Airside Motor Park showroom and offices in Swords, where the business is currently located, was purchased by Avanacar in 2016 when the landlord went into Receivership. "Avanacar also wanted to take over the running of the Citroën and DS showroom and workshop as well as adding their Seat franchise to the premises," explains Chris Graham, managing director of Citroën & DS Ireland. "We agreed and started negotiating for the sale of our retail business on the ground floor last year. Those negotiations concluded on 1st June this year. They plan to use the first-floor space as offices in much the same way as we do, so we agreed to vacate the first floor by the end of May 2018. It's a mutual agreement; we're not being forced out."

With a deadline to meet, Chris looked at a number of properties. When he'd narrowed his selection down to serious possibilities he enlisted the assistance of IM Properties. "The most important thing for us is to have a building that suits the business's needs," he explains. "But that has to be led by the fact that we've created a new team and increased from 11 to 26 people and certainly don't want to lose anyone. If we moved to South Dublin, for instance, that would cause a number of travel issues including toll costs of up to €3,000 a year. Not only that, but up to 45 minutes could be wasted just to travel 10 miles as Ireland's M50 is an incredibly unpredictable and busy road..."



“Subaru, currently located south-west of Dublin at Baldonnell, will come to join us when we have our new and suitable premises. They are comfortable with the possible locations in Dublin’s northern suburbs, close to both the M50 toll road and the airport.”

Having initially found what looked like an ideal new base, Chris then became aware of a site that was for sale. In consultation with IM Properties, it was seen as a good business decision to purchase rather than lease.

“The building may comprise approximately 1,000 sqm of which 250 sqm is expected to be a Citroën DS car showroom with an additional 250 sqm of maintenance workshop,” explains Simon. “A further 300 to 500 sqm of office/administration/workshop space will be reserved for IM purposes. We expect the building will occupy a plot of around 1 acre. However, there is much still to do. We need to ensure that the indicative costing reflects all our requirements. That’s going to take time, as will planning and construction, meaning completion will go beyond our May 2018 deadline. As a result, Chris and his team will have to go into short-term accommodation while the building is constructed.”

## TWO YEARS ON...

**IT WAS TWO YEARS TO THE DAY ON 1ST OCTOBER 2017 THAT IM TOOK OVER THE DISTRIBUTORSHIP AND RUNNING OF CITROËN IN THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND. SO HOW HAVE THE PAST 24 MONTHS BEEN FOR MANAGING DIRECTOR CHRIS GRAHAM AND HIS TEAM?**

“The market until the end of September 2016 was round about 170,000 units,” says Chris. “This year it’s around 150,000 units. So the market is about 12% down. By the end of September last year we had sold 2,722 vehicles. In the same period this year we’ve sold 2,672 meaning that whilst the market is down 12%, we are down only 1.9%. So we’ve bucked the market trend, which is a positive.

“We have a new national sales manager – a role I was also doing as well as being managing director, looking for new premises and looking after the dealership downstairs. He is Kevin Hilliard, who started on 1st June. We also have a dedicated product manager, Ed Kelleher, which has made a huge difference to us. Whereas we had James McMahon, who was doing both supply-and-distribution and product, we’ve separated the roles. That’s made a big difference to the analysis we can do on our products against the competition. Finally, we’ve appointed Jim Mulholland as our import liaison manager.

“From a Group financial perspective, this year hasn’t been as good as last year. That’s because despite everyone feeling that the market would remain stable, it’s actually 12% down. Had the market not fallen, we would have surpassed what we did last year. And because we haven’t sold the cars and LCVs, there isn’t the profit to count.”

Uncertainty over Brexit continues to affect currency exchange rates leaving Chris to describe the Brexit effect as ‘absolutely brutal’. “Unless you are living here and seeing it, listening to it on the radio and TV and seeing it on a day-by-day basis, you cannot believe just how brutal it is. For example, one of our dealers, whose business is close to the border and who has other franchises as well as Citroën, has seen his market fall by a staggering 60%.

“The problem is not just affecting us, it’s affecting everybody. We’re all desperate to see a Brexit decision – one way or the other..”





# FINANCIAL FUTURE LOOKS SECURE

CAR FINANCE IS ONE OF THE MOST FIERCELY COMPETITIVE AREAS OF THE WHOLE AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY. IT PRESENTS SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES TO ITS MEMBERS, PARTICULARLY AROUND THE DIFFICULTIES OF IMPLEMENTING AND MANAGING A RAFT OF NEW REQUIREMENTS INTRODUCED BY ITS NEW REGULATOR, THE FINANCIAL CONDUCT AUTHORITY (FCA). HOWEVER, THE FUNDING CORPORATION (TFC) SEIZES ON THESE NEW OPPORTUNITIES, SAYS CHARLES MILLER.

In the past few years TFC has had to overcome serious business difficulties which have threatened the very future of the business. But, a year or so down the line, the business is now re-organised and re-vitalised and most importantly, it is growing again and beginning to establish itself as a serious competitor within the sector.

Jason Francis, sales director at TFC, explained: "The business needed to make some difficult decisions. These were made and we are now looking forward to an exciting and successful future.

"We have seen the hire purchase business grow significantly during the past 12 months, establishing TFC as a credible player in the UK non-prime motor finance market. Our business has a stable platform of systems and these are being rapidly upgraded to match the best in class within the industry.

"The credit sanction underpins the whole business; most recently there has been substantial investment in talented people.

These have significantly improved the performance of the loan book quality and, ultimately, profitability of the business."

One of the many difficult tasks TFC continues to face is the seemingly ever-changing regulatory controls within all aspects of financial services and lending. Social changes, government policy and a raft of new regulations are just part of the menu.

Jason explained: "We have to continually drive the business to remain ahead of the regulatory curve. Our desire to be the most compliant in our market place is starting to pay dividends. Our competitors are having to make significant changes to their policies and processes to achieve a satisfactory level of compliance. The FCA principles have been embedded in the core operations of our business enabling us to make further changes in an evolutionary fashion rather than having to make fundamental changes."

TFC has now stabilised since the difficult times of 2014 and 2015, and staff numbers have

increased. "This will continue to be done in a controlled and managed way," said Jason. Staff numbers have risen, slowly, to 57 full-time employees. The expectation is that as the company grows, in line with its business plan, it will require up to six additional full-time employees. TFC expects to need more collections department staff as the business grows, and there is a further commitment to increase the credit risk team to support the credit sanction as the loan book grows.

"While staff numbers are increasing, the business is growing faster," says Jason. "This allows the business to be more cost- and process-efficient. And this attention to efficiency will continue throughout the business plan cycle."

Even the drop off in new car sales from mid-2017 has had a beneficial effect for TFC as people switch from new cars to used, which is TFC's primary market.

The FCA is the watchdog for the industry. Although some people in finance-lending see it as

a threat, Jason sees it differently. He said: “The FCA is a positive to the business. As with all regulation, it improves the business standards to which we – and competitors – work. Within a company like ours, with a parent company that has high ethical standards, it is crucial that we act in a compliant and responsible manner.

“Companies that do not comply, or act in a responsible manner, will face the full force of the FCA. Thankfully, we have a positive relationship with the regulator, which has led to significant positive change in our business over the past three years. Whilst other finance companies may not follow our standards of process, treating the customer fairly is always vital to us. TFC will always be concerned about regulation and will continue to place regulatory compliance at the forefront of our decision making.

“Being restrictive is a positive because it forces other finance companies to follow a similar process. Companies that do not comply become very exposed and at material risk to the scrutiny of the regulator.”

Jason says that what sets TFC apart from its competitors is simple: TFC does what it says and delivers. He added: “The existing clients can see the progress we are making in respect to product, policy and procedure. We have a commitment to the client and we do not expose our clients to any bad practice which could expose them to the risk of intervention from the regulator.

“We are client- and customer-centric and, hopefully, nice people to deal with at all levels on a daily basis.”

Although the existing business model of TFC is expanding, Jason says there are currently no plans to expand lending into other motor finance products, such as PCP, or diversify into any non-motor lending products. He explained: “Other finance products, such as PCP, are now coming under regulatory scrutiny in which we have no desire to involve ourselves.”

Looking to the future, he certainly sees both further challenges and opportunities. He said: “The main challenge, as always, is maintaining the balance between compliance and remaining a commercial company. The opportunity for our business comes from our competitors having to address their regulatory shortfalls, especially around affordability.

“TFC has invested and tested heavily around credit risk. Whilst our competitors are reducing acceptance and affordability levels, we will be aggressively chasing their business with a tested, proven and compliant model that is underpinned by a deep understanding of outcomes by our credit risk team.

“Refinement of our credit sanction tools will allow the business to be more accurate in targeting the best-performing customers. Investment in IT, and bringing in new infrastructure partners, will make our systems more flexible and reliable and, ultimately, improve our business proposition.”

He concluded: “While PPI exposure has been largely addressed, new claims can still be made until 29th August 2019. However, existing claims are in line with TFC’s expectations and will not hinder the financial stability or growth of the business.”



**JASON FRANCIS**  
SALES DIRECTOR AT TFC





## A DAY IN THE LIFE OF...

*Like so many people within the IM Group, daily routines for IM Properties project director Majella Lynch are always varied. “No two days are ever the same,” she says.*

*“That’s very much part of the attraction of the job, which is definitely not nine-to-five! Every day is different.*

*But I do like to be busy – and I do like to be challenged.”*

One of her current projects – relocation of IM Group’s headquarters – is not only close to her heart, it also offers plenty of challenges... “We’re having to relocate because the HS2 high-speed rail link will go right through our current premises at Coleshill,” she explains. “We’ve got to be out, and hand over the keys by June 2019. I’ve been evolving the brief with Andrew Edmiston and key department heads. This is challenging because they are obviously concentrating on their day jobs while I’m trying to get the brief together. It’s vitally important that the brief meets everybody’s needs, but it has needed to be done within a limited time-frame.”

Overall that time-frame was 24 months: just two years to get the brief together, get the building designed and obtain planning permission. The latter also included getting approval from the Secretary of State because part of the new HQ located at Fore Business Park is within the Green Belt near Solihull. With that successfully done, Majella is seeking to appoint a contractor in order to get everything finished so that staff can vacate the existing headquarters by the deadline.

Having gone out to tender, in the weeks leading up to Christmas 2017 Majella will have been considering tender returns from the major contractors invited to bid for construction of the new HQ. Within the development will be accommodation for Subaru and Isuzu staff, IM Properties people, accounts teams, IT personnel,

business development teams as well as offices for Christian Vision, the IM Academy Training Centre and, of course, all the vital ‘back-office’ support teams.

Once the contract has been awarded, and construction commenced, her focus will be on the interior design elements such as wall and floor finishes, furniture, IT and audio-visual requirements and storage areas. “This is a very important part of the process because it includes everything that people will see and use daily to make an enjoyable working environment for everyone,” she points out.

Majella, and her husband James, a production planner at Jaguar Land Rover, have three young children – Olivia, 10, Owen who has just turned seven and Josie, six. The family live in Sutton Coldfield. With her youngsters being heavily into kick-boxing, Majella is often chauffeuring them to practice and other events. Her own passion is for running having completed a number of half-marathons. When time and family commitments allow, she enjoys ‘Insanity’ classes at the gym along with the occasional glass of wine to relax!

After gaining her degree in quantity surveying, Majella moved to London to work with a main contractor for five years followed by a spell with a residential developer in Hitchin. She returned to Birmingham, where she joined W S Atkins as a quantity surveyor. However, within days of joining the company they asked her to train as a

project manager – a move she has never regretted, especially when she was seconded to Jaguar Land Rover for a number of years.

Whilst working as a senior project manager at Turner & Townsend – where one of her key projects was Birmingham’s Grand Central shopping centre, home to the largest John Lewis store outside of London – she was approached by IM Group in 2014 to join their rapidly-expanding IM Properties.

So what is her role as a project director? “My job is to work with our development team to deliver buildings that are suitable for a mixture of different future occupiers,” she explains. “I have overall responsibility for the successful initiation, planning, design, execution, monitoring and delivery of the building.

“Once we’ve arrived at a design, obtained planning approval and have an occupier on board, my task is to progress the design, go out to tender, get a contractor and deliver the building, on time, and within budget. I literally have to see the project all the way through. That’s one of the aspects of my job that I love most – having to see everything through from start to finish. Sometimes that happens quite quickly; other times there can be a number of years of planning before you even get on site.

“The most challenging project I’ve done so far at IMP is one that was delivered at the end of 2016 – the Wholesale Market building in Birmingham.

*“I really enjoying working at IM Properties,  
especially with the challenges and opportunities it  
brings – such as our new HQ building!”*



*The new IM HQ concept.*

The requirement was to deliver a number of buildings in readiness for fitting out. What was challenging was that we were delivering not only for Birmingham City Council, but also to around 78 individual traders who were going to be accommodated in the market. There were a number of significant changes requested during the project by the City Council, which were both cost- and time-dependant. And all had to be implemented by the agreed completion date – that was really difficult!”

Majella’s drive to work starts early. After dropping her children off at their before-school clubs, she arrives at 8:30am. After the office move to Fore Business Park her journey will be a bit longer, but it’s not something that concerns her. “I really enjoying working at IM Properties, especially with the challenges and opportunities it brings – such as our new HQ building!”





# THE FUTURE IN FOCUS

*Andrew Edmiston says*

*IM is strong enough to meet  
future challenges.*

Unusually I am writing this comment on board a flight from Malmo, where our Nordic head office is located, back to Birmingham. The conversation has been about the Final Edition of the iconic Subaru STI, about which you can read in the news section. This year our long-time Nordic MD, Torbjörn Lillrud, joined our UK based staff leaving Christer Blomdell to continue the development of that business. The two subjects seem a fitting simile for what has been happening in the automotive market and our car business this year. There has been a real wind of change and a sense that the car industry is reaching a point of 'no-return' in terms of moving to new and freshly-developed powertrains in the near future. In the same way that Torbjörn's tenure with IM Nordic echoes the success we have seen as a company with the Subaru Impreza, we are proud of our past. But this also means that we are hungry for future success. Gaining encouragement from things we have achieved in the past gives us the necessary desire to adapt to a future that will be quite different.

Funnily enough, this is also one of those issues that affects other businesses in our group. These days we spend a lot of time thinking about how the property market will develop and change, something which has more to do with people and their needs, habits and wants than bricks. As more and more legislation hits us regarding the way we live our lives, this has an impact on what our cities, towns and suburbs will look like. It affects how they will be organised and powered and how we go about our daily lives in regard to communication, transport and movement. We are in the throes of a new

HQ project, having become subject to HS2's voracious appetite for real estate. For the first time we have to seriously consider how we plan our parking area in respect of the electrification of vehicles, which will be upon us during the life of our new address. Not only that, how driverless vehicles, a rather unpredictable new technology in terms of how it will be implemented into society, is a consideration for our new HQ and for our development projects of the future.

Renewable energy and how it will be able to cope, if at all, with a heavily-electrified vehicle fleet is also a major question (otherwise, how suitable is electricity in terms of cleaning up vehicle emissions if we have to employ 'dirty' means of making or buying it?) Some estimates put a fully electrified vehicle fleet in the region of 15 to 18GW in terms of the UK's additional requirement. Currently around 60GW is required to power the UK and Hinkley point, which will be 30 years in development, will provide 3.5GW extra. If we are to move to full vehicle electrification, or even half, we will have to save power in other areas of the economy.

There is much to get to grips with in finding out the best way for our company to play its part in writing the future. I think we are good at this. Not necessarily being at the forefront of technology, but being at the forefront of understanding its implications for our customers and clients and for the buildings we build. The people we serve, and helping them to live their lives in an exciting new environment has always been our focus and it is how we have been successful. Let's not stop!

# PICKUP 2017

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*Isuzu was founded 101 years ago, is one of the world's oldest truck and diesel engine manufacturers and today makes the world's most complete pick-up – the new D-MAX. This is our heritage, says the Swedish advertisement for what it describes as the 100% pick-up. And there are 10 versions from which to choose.*

## 10 NYA PICKUPER MED 100-ÅRIG HISTORIA

ISUZU grundades 1916 och är en av världens största och äldsta tillverkare av lastbilar och dieselmotorer. Detta är vårt arv och det finns i vårt DNA - kunskap vi använder när vi bygger marknadens mest kompletta pickuper.

Vi är 100 % pickup.

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