

For immediate release

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Mazda Looks to Expand Company Car Sales in 2010

- Rising corporate demand for Mazda3 and Mazda CX-7 models
- 'Core' fleet sales predicted to further accelerate
- Special programme secures new fleet opportunities

Mazda is predicting an increase in company car demand from outright purchase fleets and contract hire and leasing companies in 2010. Following the tough economic conditions of the last 18 months, Peter Allibon, Fleet and Remarketing Director, Mazda UK is looking forward to this year with renewed optimism on the strength of the green shoots of recovery, rising demand for recently launched models and the promise of the showroom arrival of exciting new models during 2010.

The all-new Mazda3, launched in 2009, is now finding favouritism with fleets and an enhancement to the general contract hire proposition is showing early signs of winning user-chooser business at the expense of rivals within this segment. The new Mazda CX-7 is also starting to gain traction in the corporate sector, due to its new diesel engine and premium interior features.

Mazda has pursued a weight reduction strategy with all new models that deliver carbon dioxide emission cuts and fuel economy improvements - both critical as businesses and drivers look to cut tax and fuel bills.

Mr Allibon said: "Company car tax thresholds are due to tighten a further one percentage point per 5g/km of CO₂ in April and with each new addition to the range we are seeing engine technology improvements that deliver significant benefits to customers across the board.

"I am optimistic for 2010: the Mazda6 will remain a fleet leader, due to its high levels of specification and unrivalled residual value position. Meanwhile, Mazda3 demand is rising and we are seeing the model being included on an increasing number of company car choice lists. Mazda2 continues to be considered by corporate, public sector fleets and company car opt outs. Mazda MX-5 remains popular with user-choosers, meanwhile Mazda5 and new Mazda CX-7 are starting to make inroads.

"In the final quarter of 2009 we undertook a prospecting initiative that has driven up our corporate team's new customer appointment bookings for the first few months of 2010. Early indications from the appointments that have been carried out to date are very positive. More businesses are receptive to the prospect of dealing with Mazda on a long term basis than ever before, due to the

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much improved fleet focused product range that we now have on offer. This is a good indication of the opportunities available to Mazda to increase fleet business,” added Allibon.

Meanwhile Mazda will undertake “profitable” Motability and daily rental business in 2010 after stepping back from both sectors in recent months. Allibon explained: “We are undertaking fleet business as a result of demand. We have not ‘pushed’ vehicles out to core fleet channels and that strategy continues this year.”

Mazda UK grew its share of the UK new car market to a record 2.4 percent in 2009, selling a total of 47,934 vehicles - ahead of its forecast. Meanwhile total fleet volumes shrunk as a result of the pull back from Motability and daily rental business. However, Mazda’s sales to ‘core’ end-user fleets and contract hire and leasing companies out-stripped the market in 2009.

“The tough economy and fleets extending replacement cycles have obviously affected sales while our ‘core’ fleet sales accounted for more than 57 percent of our fleet volumes in 2009 compared with 38 percent in 2008. While those volumes are down almost 15 percent year-on-year the market is down 28 percent, which means that corporate interest in Mazda is strong,” added Allibon.

He added: “We are starting to see businesses that extended fleet replacement cycles in the recession return to the market. As a result, Mazda has a double opportunity to secure corporate sales in 2010 from organisations that extended replacement cycles and will not extend again, as well as those that have continued to pursue natural change cycles.

“The planned April 1 shake-up in Vehicle Excise Duty rates and the introduction of a ‘special’ first year VED rate that benefits low emission models, but hits cars with emissions above 161 g/km, means that the March plate change month will be crucial to determining the potential for sales growth this year.

“We believe the Mazda6 will lead the brand to an increased fleet market share and a rise in corporate sales. Mazda’s sustained pricing strategy, high levels of specification and strong residual values will leave us well placed to attract new customers to the brand throughout 2010.”

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