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**Mazda’s flying start to the year sets pace for 2016**

* Record March sales boost first quarter in a year where Mazda expects six per cent sales growth.
* Sales up 12 per cent year-on-year in the first five months of 2016.
* 2016 sees a renewed focus on the customer and delivering a first-class owner experience.

After making a flying start to the year with sales up 12 per cent year-on-year in the first five months, Mazda UK is forecasting that its volume will grow by six per cent in 2016. Total sales over the first five months of 2016 were 22,370, boosted by a record March that was the best single sales month in the company’s history.

In the key month of March Mazda UK sold more than 11,500 cars, beating the previous record of 11,450 set in September 2009 at the height of the scrappage scheme. Overall year-on-year growth of six per cent is seen as modest by Mazda UK Sales Director Peter Allibon – the company has, after all, just recorded three consecutive years of 20 per cent growth taking sales from 26,200 in 2012 to 45,500 last year.

The forecast this year is for sales to top 48,000 with the multi-award winning all-new Mazda MX-5 – the only car to win both World Car of the Year and World Car Design of the Year - and all-new Mazda CX-3 leading the charge. Allibon expects CX-3 sales to double to 5,250 units and MX-5 sales to grow by 1,700 over last year to top 4,700.

 “We’ve seen a massive increase in retail sales and it’s very challenging for us and our dealers to deliver that kind of volume while focusing on the quality of service and ownership our customers expect. The additional volumes last year didn’t generate the extra profit for our dealers we would have liked so this year we want to focus on making sure the network hits the industry average for return on sales – something we keep just missing.”

Both Mazda UK and the dealer network are investing heavily to ensure that everyone who interacts with Mazda is positively surprised and feels personally engaged. The aim is delivering a first-class retail experience across our whole network “We have a two-year customer experience programme, a Mazda blueprint, which will change the way dealer staff approach customers. We want to get the quality aspect of everything we do right,” explained Allibon.

Following the global success of its new range, volumes of all of Mazda UK’s cars are constrained by capacity at Mazda Corporation’s worldwide factories. Global sales are 1.55m and capacity is 1.7m – the extra units go to joint venture manufacturing agreements. “It’s great news for Mazda Corporation but can present challenges to the sales director of a national sales company,” said Allibon adding that the constraint was actually good news for customers and dealers as demand outstripping supply helps keep residual values high.

“As an independent brand Mazda is doing extremely well, investing heavily in research and development for new models for the future. We’ve built a sustainable and profitable business which has credibility within the industry and is the franchise of choice for dealer groups looking to expand their portfolio. We now need to consolidate that business,” said Allibon.

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*For further information please contact one of the following:*

Graeme Fudge, PR Director | T: 01322 622 691 | E-mail: gfudge@mazdaeur.com

Owen Mildenhall, PR Manager | T: 01322 622 713 | Email: omildenhall@mazdaeur.com

Lois Cavanagh, Press Officer | T: 01322 622 650 | Email: lcavanagh@mazdaeur.com

Martine Varrall, Press Officer | T: 01322 622 776 | Email: mvarrall@mazdaeur.com

Ref: 160602FINAL