

MOTORING MATTERS *by Sandie Goodwin*

A SMARTER FUTURE *by David Miles*

Smart has been refinanced and reorganised by its DaimlerChrysler parent company. On 6 July smart outlined its plans for Technology in the Future. Smart were also an official global partner for the Live Earth concerts and currently are paving the way for the new fortwo city cars with a high profile advertising 'hearts and minds' campaign using the strapline of 'is greatness a matter of size'.

Dr. Frank Ruff, leader of the Society and Technical Research Group within DaimlerChrysler opened proceeding by saying that pollution and congestion within our cities is nothing new. He said, "Over 130 years ago in London there was a pollution problem. It was actually forecast in 1873 that if the volume of horse-drawn traffic continued to rise England would be covered by a metre (a yard) of horse manure by 1961." Of course like many doom and gloom forecasts that didn't happen due to the invention of powered transport and of course Gottlieb Daimler was involved in creating the first motor carriage which evolved into the car. So 'horse-s..t' and 'bull-s..t' one media wag commented as Dr Ruff said, "We are thinking from the outside in, we are questioning the future of the car, not the car itself, but the future of the driving and parking space in the city."

Dr Ruff said: "We see the present day going down in history as a 'green tipping point', a point in time where there has been a significant rise in customers who want to lead energy conscious lifestyles without sacrificing individuality, mobility, comfort and safety. Driving with fun and painlessly green is the central theme here. If we hadn't already invented smart, we would have had to invent it today."

After a brief drive the new fortwo is a great improvement. It looks better, the engine has more power and torque, the transmission is also much improved, the quality of the interior looks better able to compete against 'cult' cars such as the MINI, there is more luggage room but the comfort of ride and handling is still poor relative to a conventional small city car.

The Fortwo mhd (micro hybrid drive) is likely to be introduced to the UK market in the second part of next year, available first of all in left hand drive form. The fortwo mhd uses the new 999cc, three cylinder petrol engine with 71bhp and 92nm of torque at 4,500rpm. The mhd or 'micro hybrid' drive refers to the use of a belt driven starter/generator that supplies the vehicle's electrical system but has a secondary function as a starter motor. Unlike the

current use of the word hybrid to describe vehicles using petrol or diesel engines in conjunction with an electric motor, smart's use of 'hybrid' refers to this stop-start system and it could mean they are exempt from congestion charging.

Smart is to provide 100 Smart fortwo ed (electric drive) vehicles exclusively for use in London. The prototype cars are based on the current fortwo, not the new bodyshell, and they will all be right hand drive vehicles and will be leased to fleet operators for use by the business community. The vehicles will also be on trial with four London Boroughs. The experiment will last for four years with each car covering between 40,000 and 50,000 miles and the performance and durability of each car will be monitored by DaimlerChrysler in the UK. Ten years is considered to be the life of the battery. Following the trials, if successful, production versions using the new fortwo with a new generation of sodium-nickel-chloride batteries, said to be two years away from availability, will go on public sale.

This particular smart fortwo has no combustion engine. The 41bhp magnetic electric motor is fitted in the rear of the car driven by a high performance, high temperature battery fitted between the sandwich floor layers in the centre of the vehicle. The fortwo ed has a single forward gear and a reverse gear. Switch on, push the accelerator and the car moves swiftly and seamlessly away from standstill with no more than a jet like whistle. There is no gear changing, just push and go and brake to stop, easy driving. The acceleration allows the driver to keep up with the speed of traffic on less busy town or city commuter roads.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Readers may remember that the first private hire vehicle to be licensed in London was a 2 seat Smart car which was being used by WestOne Passenger Cars. This licensed private hire company is part of City Sprint. Private hire companies in the capital are all looking to prove their "green" credentials and some have already chosen to run the Toyota Prius on their fleets. This latest experiment with the Smart fortwo ed could give the private hire trade another choice of vehicle with which to attract corporate clients looking for the "green" credentials.



BAN ON SMOKING SHOULD COVER PRIVATE VEHICLES

Cars used for strictly private purposes are exempt from the recent smoking legislation. In a survey conducted by Motorpoint, the UK's largest car supermarket, since the introduction of the new rules, a staggering 62% of respondents claimed that the ban on smoking in

company cars does not go far enough, and that it should be extended to those which are privately owned. The latest research

from insurance group Privilege, has shown that motorists who smoke, drive on average 23% faster than non-smokers. Motorpoint are currently looking at introducing a no smoking sticker in every company car and commercial vehicle sold.



ROLLS-ROYCE CONVERTIBLE DEBUTS IN FRANCE

Rolls-Royce Motor Cars unveiled the new Phantom Drophead Coupé for the first time in France, at the famous Polo de Bagatelle in Paris. The two-door, four-seater convertible is the kind of car you dream about buying when you win the lottery. Individually built by highly skilled craftsmen at the company's world headquarters in Goodwood, on the south coast of England, you can order yours for £260,000.

