



SPECIAL REPORT

# MINI IN GREAT SHAPE FOR INCREASED CORPORATE SALES

Comprehensive model line-up expected to attract  
attention of user-choosers and fleet operators

In association with





## Refreshed model line-up puts MINI firmly on corporate radar

Last year presented many challenges, but the offering for 2018 should form a stronger connection with user-choosers and fleet operators

**M**INI is aiming to reach new heights in 2018 with renewed appeal for corporate customers, thanks to one of the freshest ranges of cars on the market.

An updated MINI Hatch line-up for 2018 joins a Clubman range completed in 2016, as well as the new the MINI Countryman Plug-In Hybrid introduced in 2017.

While MINI might traditionally be seen as more of a retail choice, it has long had a presence in the corporate sector and is backed up by the multi-award-winning BMW team.

Steve Oliver, BMW UK General Manager, Corporate Sales, believes MINI's current line-up will forge a stronger connection with user-choosers and fleet operators, with potential to increase its share of the fleet market in 2018.

He says: "Last year MINI achieved around 370,000 global sales, and around 68,000 registrations in the UK, which is tremendous."

"But, from a corporate point of view, people perhaps don't fully understand our current range and how our latest models fit into different parts of the car market."

Many of the reasons that make cars appealing to retail buyers can also make them strong contenders with corporate customers, particularly with a company such as BMW behind it.

Appealingly low personal contract purchase (PCP) rates and affordable servicing and maintenance, are based on strong residual values, and low SMR rates, while fuel costs are also among the best in class.

MINI posted an increase in private sales in 2017, in what was a particularly challenging year for new car sales compared with the recent past. It registered slightly fewer cars in true fleet compared with 2016, but Oliver believes that its revamped line-up in 2018 has all the substance that will appeal to rational fleet operators, to back up the style and fun-to-drive characteristics that will appeal to user-choosers.

The MINI Hatch has built on the success of the iconic original Mini, and remains the most popular model in the range, offering a choice of a compact three-door and a longer, more spacious five-door. It sets the benchmark for premium small cars that other manufacturers have sought to follow.

The MINI Convertible is based on the Hatch, and offers the same style and fun with a folding fabric roof.

For its second generation, the MINI Clubman has moved up a class, growing in size and competing with popular lower-medium hatchbacks.

The MINI Countryman is a fully-fledged compact SUV – competing in a sector that has strong appeal for user-choosers – with a choice of front-wheel drive or four-wheel drive, and has a unique in-sector offering with a plug-in hybrid version.

Oliver adds: "We cover so much more of the market now compared with when we introduced the MINI Hatch in 2001. From a business-user point of view the cars make much more sense."

He is excited about the updated MINI Hatch, available from March, with new features that will be an added draw for corporate customers.

He says: "With revisions for 2018, the cars look fresh, with LED lighting front and rear, key connected services, with one of the standout items for business drivers being the availability of real-time traffic information in the navigation system (the system isn't standard on MINI Hatch and convertible).

"This enables drivers to greatly reduce the time they might be stuck in traffic, and real-time connectivity allows drivers to plot their way around delays on the roads, making more efficient use of their time.

"MINI can be a great corporate choice. But while some of our retail customers have appreciated and enjoyed some of the more eye-catching colour schemes and accessories, they are not to everyone's tastes.

"But we encourage businesses to look again at our configurators because we have introduced some more subtle colours for 2018 that are better suited to the corporate market."

But MINI's sense of fun is still present, and, of course, it's still seen as a British brand. For 2018, the LED light signature in the rear lamps is in the design of the Union Flag.

The small car sector is important as the biggest sector in Europe, but MINI's other models compete in equally important market segments and can appeal to customers who like what the brand stands for, but for whom the MINI Hatch isn't suitable.

The lower-medium sector is still one of the most important market segments in Europe and key to corporate sales in the UK.

And as the SUV segment continues to grow, the most cost-effective and efficient models are gaining the strongest foothold in the market.

Oliver says: "The Clubman and Countryman are signs of the brand's maturity. They are cars that always offer style and sophistication, and from an urban mobility point of view they are a real 'business class' proposition, and we think this will lead to more success with fleets.

"We now have the Countryman Plug-in Hybrid, which we introduced in the middle of last year. We sold 1,000 in the second half of 2017, but would have been able to do more if we could.

"We were very restricted in our supply, but have secured more for 2018. With our BMW hybrids, around 90% of registrations are corporate sales, so we have potential to expand our corporate share with the plug-in hybrid."

While 2017 had its challenges for new car registrations in the UK, Oliver is optimistic for 2018, with lessons learned from last year feeding into future strategies. He believes MINI could be better protected from some of the quirks that have contributed to a decline in overall new car sales in the UK.

He says: "Although 2017 was a challenging year for the car industry, it was still one of the best years on record, and there was some growth in premium car sales.

"We've really got our head around some of those challenges of 2017 and the market dynamics, so we feel confident about 2018. We've had a great deal of interest in the 2018 models so far as well as online enquiries."

*"We cover so much more of the market now compared with when we introduced MINI Hatch in 2001"*

*Steve Oliver, BMW UK General Manager, Corporate Sales*



While new diesel car sales are currently undergoing a decline, prompted by uncertainty over future tax treatment and confusion over some of the harmful exhaust emissions, Oliver says that diesel has traditionally had a lower share of MINI sales in the UK than for some other brands.

"MINI isn't a big player in diesel, with a share of around 25% of Countryman and Clubman sales, and we have a very high petrol share in our other models," he says.

"And, of course, the plug-in hybrid gives customers a further alternative to diesel."

With CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of 55g/km and a plug-in range of up to 25 miles, Oliver believes the introduction of the MINI Countryman Plug-In Hybrid has been well timed.

Oliver also points to changes in how it enables its retail network to do business with corporate customers that should make the brand easier for them to work with.

He is certain these changes will enable MINI to improve its share of the fleet sector in 2018.

He says: "We've undergone a process of simplifying the way we work with retailers, ensuring they are much more focused on corporate customers and that those customers' needs are met in sales and servicing.

"We've made improvements in availability of demonstrators to retailers for corporate customers, and ensure they are experienced in dealing with business customers.

"Our whole team is enthusiastic about the months ahead."

# MINI RANGE



The new MINI 5-Door Hatch



Twin rear doors are a feature of the MINI Clubman

## The MINI Clubman

A standout alternative to a conventional lower-medium hatchback, the MINI Clubman has no 'entry-level' variant, with the line-up starting with Cooper and Cooper D variants.

The MINI Clubman has four doors to access the cabin, as well as its characteristic twin rear doors for the luggage compartment.

Accommodating five adults is no problem and the premium interior is focused around a full-colour 6.5- or 8.8-inch screen. The screens serve as a display for infotainment, phone and navigation functions, and have an LED ring surround, which can optionally respond to road situations and to specific operating procedures by means of an interactive lighting display.

Alloy wheels, MINI Navigation, MINI Excitement Pack, interior lights pack, and stop/start button with keyless entry are all standard, as is a six-speed manual transmission. There is an eight-speed automatic option.

MINI's ALL4 all-wheel drive is available as an option, delivering the security of improved traction in poor weather and road conditions.

The MINI Clubman is available with a 136PS engine in the Cooper, a 192PS engine in the Cooper S, and a 231PS output in the John Cooper Works, with diesel options including the 150PS Cooper D and the 190PS Cooper S D. CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are from 119g/km in the Clubman Cooper D.

## The new MINI 5-Door and 3-Door Hatch

With a heritage that can be traced back almost 60 years – and freshly updated for 2018 – the new MINI Hatch combines the classic style of the original with cutting-edge features.

Offering an all-turbo line-up of petrol or diesel engines, as well as a choice of compact 3-door or more spacious 5-door variants, the MINI Hatch offers fuel efficiency and small car running costs alongside premium car residual values.

A raft of updates for 2018 make the new MINI Hatch more appealing, with new LED front and rear lights, with first-in-class optional matrix automatically adjustable high-beam, and all versions get a 6.5-inch full colour dashboard display, with the option to upgrade to MINI Navigation with touchscreen and Apple CarPlay functionality.

There is a simplified infotainment system available for 2018 with one new Navigation Plus package, which includes a new 8.8-inch touchscreen display, wireless phone charging, MINI Connected services including real-time traffic information, improved voice recognition software, MINI Concierge Service, online services and Apple CarPlay.

For 2018, MINI has introduced new options and enhanced the equipment offered in the popular Pepper and Chili packs.

Pepper Pack adds 15-inch alloy wheels, MINI Excitement Pack, leather steering wheel, rain sensor with automatic headlight activation and

automatic air conditioning. A new addition to the Pepper Pack for 2018 is rear park distance control.

Chili Pack, building on the Pepper Pack, adds 17-inch alloy wheels, cloth and leather upholstery, a sport steering wheel and a sport button to further enhance the driving experience.

The MINI Excitement Package, which is included in the Pepper and Chili packs, now includes MINI logo projection on the driver's side. When the vehicle door is opened and closed, the new MINI logo is projected onto the ground in front of the door from a light source in the exterior mirror and can be seen there for 20 seconds, or permanently if the door is left open.

A seven-speed dual-clutch automatic transmission is available as an option, delivering exceptional fuel economy – in some cases better than the manual – and rapid, yet smooth, gearshifts.

The petrol engine line-up includes the 102PS One, the 136PS Cooper, the 192PS Cooper S and the 231PS John Cooper Works (three-door only), with diesels including the 95PS One D, the 116PS Cooper D and the 170PS Cooper S D.

CO<sub>2</sub> emissions start from 99g/km for the One D, with fuel consumption of 78.5mpg on the combined cycle, and 111g/km and 57.6mpg for the One.



The MINI Countryman is a spacious contender in the increasingly popular SUV market

## The MINI Countryman

The MINI Countryman offers the characteristics associated with MINI, but in a versatile and family-friendly SUV package.

The most spacious model in the MINI line-up, the MINI Countryman provides customers with higher ground clearance than a traditional hatchback, as well as the option of ALL4 four-wheel drive traction for improved off-road capability.

The MINI Countryman is also the first MINI to be offered with an electrified powertrain in the MINI Countryman Plug-in Hybrid, helping company car drivers minimise their benefit-in-kind tax liability, and offering greatly reduced fuel costs when running on electric.

The engine line-up is similar to the MINI Clubman, with a choice of a 136PS petrol engine in the Cooper, and a 192PS unit in the Cooper S, with a 150PS diesel in the Cooper D and a 190PS Cooper S D.

ALL4 is available on certain engine variants. This latest version of the system not only reacts quickly and precisely to changing situations, it is also compact and offers a high level of internal efficiency.

The standard collision warning with city braking function can be extended to include the Driving Assistant system with camera-based active cruise control, pedestrian warning with initial brake function, high beam assistant and road sign detection. In addition to this, Park Distance Control, rear view camera, Parking Assistant and Head-Up-Display are also available as options.

The Countryman Plug-in Hybrid draws on the expertise in this area

from across the BMW Group, including the range of BMW iPerformance vehicles.

A three-cylinder turbocharged petrol engine with MINI TwinPower technology, producing 136PS and 162lb-ft of torque, powers the front wheels. This engine is combined with a six-speed Steptronic transmission. The rear wheels are powered by an electric motor housed under the floor of the luggage compartment. This motor offers 88PS and 122lb-ft of torque, with all of the torque available from zero rpm.

A total system output of 224PS and a combined torque of 284lb-ft are available, enabling 0-62 mph in just 6.9 seconds. Fuel consumption and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are very low, with 134.5mpg on the combined cycle and 55 g/km respectively, and it can travel up to 25 miles on electric power alone.

MINI has significantly raised the level of standard equipment offered on the new Countryman, introduced in 2017, with many features previously included in a pack on the predecessor now fitted as standard. Highlights include 16-inch alloy wheels on Cooper and Cooper D models, rear parking sensors (PDC), MINI Connected and Bluetooth connectivity. MINI Cooper S and Cooper S D Countryman models add 17-inch alloy wheels and cloth/leather upholstery. All models in the MINI Countryman range now benefit from satellite navigation as standard.

Diesel CO<sub>2</sub> emissions start at 113g/km, with petrol engine CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from 126g/km.

## The new MINI Convertible

The new MINI Convertible benefits from the same updates at the MINI Hatch for 2018, and offers the convenience of an electrically retractable roof to transform into an open car in 18 seconds.

The all-petrol engine line-up is designed to reflect customer demand, in Cooper, Cooper S, and John Cooper Works grades.

The manual versions of the MINI Cooper Convertible have CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of 115g/km and fuel consumption of 56.5mpg on the combined cycle, with 118g/km and 54.3mpg for the Cooper S Convertible, and 150g/km and 49.6mpg for the John Cooper Works.



The Convertible's retractable roof can be opened in 18 seconds



The MINI Countryman plug-in hybrid. Next year a fully-electric MINI Hatch will be introduced



# MINI steps up green offering with fleet sector in mind

Desire of corporates to reduce their environmental footprint has meant increased interest in the fully electric model due next year

**C**orporate sales could be a major driver in establishing MINI's low- and zero-emission credentials in the near future with new electrified models.

According to Steve Roberts, head of corporate and used cars at MINI, the new MINI Countryman Plug-in Hybrid is set for a sales boost in 2018, and a new fully-electric model arriving in 2019 is also generating interest.

He says: "We launched the MINI Countryman Plug-in Hybrid in the middle of 2017, and registered our allocation of 1,000 cars.

"We could have done with more of them in 2017 had that been possible. Demand had been somewhat underestimated, but we have been successful in ensuring an improved supply for 2018. We hope to double the available volume across a full year instead of 2017's second-half availability.

"We already have improved supply for Q1 this year, and production has been ramped up for Q2. We're trying our best to fulfil customer demand."

Roberts says anyone choosing the hybrid will not notice any difference in the practicality or versatility compared with a petrol or diesel version.

"The MINI Hybrid is still an SUV that can seat four or five adults, and there has been no compromise with interior space or luggage volume from accommodating the battery.

"It still has a full-size boot, and feedback from customers has been really positive. We have had large fleet of demonstrators since day one and they have proved very successful with our fleet

customers as they've had the chance to get a good impression of how it feels living with a plug-in hybrid."

The range of electrified models will be expanded in 2019 with a new model built in the UK at MINI's Plant Oxford.

Although technical specifications have not yet been published, Roberts says there has already been significant interest from customers.

"At the end of last year we announced there would be an electric MINI Hatch in 2019," he says, "And what's really surprising is the amount of interest that has generated among our existing customers already on our database, as well as opening the door to other customers we haven't done business with before."

According to Roberts, having a fully electric drive system has been recognised by potential customers.

He says: "A lot of people are now reviewing their fleet policies and looking ahead to what's coming in the near future. Many are looking at how they could deploy fully electric cars within their businesses.

"We have already set up a working group to develop the launch strategy for that car and

particularly with the fleet sector in mind."

As businesses continue to review and adopt practices and strategies that confirm their 'green' credentials, Roberts believes this will strengthen the opportunity for the new electric MINI.

"There are a lot of companies out there who not only have environmental guidelines, but also need to be seen to be green, too," he says.

Although we don't yet know details of the car's performance and range, Roberts says it will be absolutely competitive with other electric vehicles on the market.

While the new model will be the first electric MINI, Roberts says the company has a great deal of expertise in the technology, beginning with the pioneering MINI E-Trial that began in 2009, as well as introducing electrified production cars elsewhere in the BMW line-up.

Roberts says: "It's surprising how many people remember the MINI E-Trial we did. And it did give us a great deal of electric vehicle learning and expertise that we can now offer in the BMW i range, the BMW plug-in hybrids, our own MINI Countryman Plug-in Hybrid and now the new electric MINI."

*"What's really surprising is the amount of interest that has generated among our existing customers"*

*Steve Roberts, MINI head of corporate and used cars*