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New motoring news you might have missed

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A round-up of the major and not so major stories of the week in a handy Glovebox guide to motoring news.

By Robin Roberts (and Miles Better News Agency).

The British built Suzuki Swace estate is about to go on sale.



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A badge-engineered version of the Toyota Corolla Hybrid Estate made in Derby with engines from Deeside, the newcomer will be sold in SZ-T and SZ5 trim.

The nominal boot space of 596 litres (21.05 cu.ft) rises to 1,606 litres (56.71 cu.ft) when the back seats are dropped and the boot floor is reversible to take wet or dirty items without marking the carpet side.

The prices start at £27,499 and £29,299 respectively for the 102 ps petrol models which have 53 kW electric motor for economy and performance boost which lifts maximum power to 122 hp for the automatic-only models.



Second-hand battery and electric cars are being sought by drivers, says the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders in their latest report on the used car market.



[Nissan LEAF all-electric vehicle, from 2012.](#)

The UK's used car market increased by 4.4% in Q3 after two consecutive quarters of decline, according to the latest figures published today by the SMMT.

During the busiest quarter since the end of 2016, some 2,168,599 transactions took place between July and September, 92,217 more than the same period in 2019, with September recording the largest growth, up 6.3%.

Despite the growth, spurred by the re-opening of showrooms and easing of lockdown measures across the country, the UK's used car market is still down with 1,070,941 fewer transactions over the first nine months representing a decline of -17.5% overall.

With England entering a new lockdown and the introduction of tougher restrictions and 'firebreaks' across the devolved nations, sales in the fourth quarter are expected to be heavily affected.



The swift re-opening of used car outlets - which are generally spacious premises with outdoor areas and which can accommodate social distancing far more easily than other retail environments - would go a long way to help prevent further subdued activity in the market, enabling the latest, lowest emitting vehicles to filter through to second owners.



Ford Fiesta - UK's top-selling used car.

Demand for pre-owned battery electric vehicles (BEVs), which saw a decline of -29.7% in the Q2 - albeit a lesser one than the market average of -48.9% - recovered during Q3, growing by 34.4% and 4.4% in the year to date. At the same time, sales of plug-in hybrids increased by 35.7%, with 10,040 changing hands.

Petrol and diesel cars both saw an increase in sales of 4.5% and 2.6% respectively,



accounting for 97.42% of all used transactions during the quarter.

SMMT CEO Mike Hawes said, “The car is playing an even more important role in keeping society moving as public transport becomes less attractive for many.

It is encouraging to see used car sales returned to growth but, as the pandemic continues and outlets in many areas are being made to close again, the short-term outlook is less positive.

Given these premises are often proven to be Covid-secure, we need them to re-open quickly to protect vital jobs and ensure no further delay to the fleet renewal necessary to deliver environmental improvements.”

Seán Kemple, Managing Director at Close Brothers Motor Finance said, “In the current climate, it’s positive to see growth in used car registrations.

The release of pent-up demand caused by the first national lockdown has spiked sales over this period, and the market has been able to hold onto a steady performance despite the sweeping restrictions hitting the car industry.

Throughout the pandemic, consumers have turned to used cars and alternative finance for more affordable options. Consumer preference has also shifted from public transport to owning a vehicle, and this has helped to boost the used car market this quarter.”

He went on, “Opposite to the new car market, which has seen dwindling demand, diesel registrations have been strong for used cars. This comes down to buyers spending time researching their car and understanding the fuel type that’ll suit their needs.

Petrol sales remain strong, and alternative fuelled vehicle (AFVs) sales have also risen, although this is far from the rate of increase that we’ve seen for new cars.

While the new car market has dealt with numerous challenges over recent months, namely



lack of production and long lead times, the used car market has benefited from buyers making a shift from new to used.”

In another survey, Government figures show 19,487 public charging points now exist in the UK.

RAC data insight spokesman Rod Dennis said: “The rise in the number of charge points across the UK is very encouraging and sends all the right signals to drivers who might be thinking about opting for an electric model next time they change their car. Add in the fact that many people with electric cars can charge from home and overall it’s a positive picture.

But there’s still a way to go and the focus now needs to be on installing as many fast chargers as possible, given that less than a fifth of public chargers are rapid.”

The average independent garage charges £47.47 per hour and it’s risen less than the rate of inflation over the last eight years.



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A survey of 3,338 repair shops which are members of the Independent Garage Association found that this year the typical cost in England was £47.90, in Scotland it was £45.52, Wales worked out at £40.61 and Northern Ireland was £40.55.

Inside the M25 the hourly rate was about £55.48 but that's not the dearest area, which is the Isle of Wight at £75 an hour.

Compared to average rate of inflation exceeding 2.5% over each of the eight years, the rise in garage labour rates has been 6.7% for the same period as a whole and that actual money paid out has risen just £5.88.

The small, locally owned family businesses look after the bulk of Britain's cars and vans and IGA CEO Stuart James said, "It's clear the independent garage sector continues to offer exceptional value to its customers.

However, in real terms the sector is falling behind inflation meaning garage businesses are seeing diminishing returns year on year."

He added that the figures showed the IGA members were absorbing costs and this is unsustainable in the long-term.

For working on the spanners and software the UK typical technician is paid £13.65 an hour and they are about 26.3% below the rise for other manual occupations, according to data from the Office of National Statistics.

The main costs to garages are insurance policies, which have decreased over eight years, and electricity which has gone up over 42%.

The "puddle police" are lurking on a kerb near you.



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Lawyers who have seen a business decline from the clampdown on insurance miss-selling can target drivers who splash pedestrians or cyclists.

Drivers face a £100 Fixed Penalty Notice and three points for each offence for splashing others but this can escalate to £5,000 if contested and lost in court.

Then more money has to be paid through raised insurance premiums. It also means a potential civil claim can be mounted for additional damages. All it needs is the vehicle registration from the number plate.

Brokers Uswitch asked a range of drivers about splashing pedestrians and cyclists and found one in three motorists admit they have committed the offence and risked fines and



points.

One in 18 drivers said they did it on purpose and half said they did feel guilty, except those in Yorkshire where one-in-eight said they felt no guilt.

Young drivers are worst, while women and older drivers were more considerate towards avoiding splashing others. It also discovered that young people were most likely to report being splashed.

Uswitch car insurance expert, Florence Codjoe, said: "Drivers who deliberately splash pedestrians on the pavement are breaking the law and could face being fined from £100 to £5,000, along with receiving three penalty points.

It's always important to take extra caution when driving in wet weather and slow down when you see a pedestrian walking by."

She added, "Deliberately splashing a pedestrian with a puddle is a criminal offence and is not acceptable in the eyes of the law. Not only could you face a fine and penalty points, if convicted you'll likely see your car insurance premiums increase.

Insurance companies price their car insurance products based on a series of risk calculations, predicting how likely a driver is to make a claim.

"If you have a motoring conviction, insurers will see you as a greater risk and your insurance premiums will increase."

The car is king again.



Travel by road in your own car is seen by many as the best way to go. (Photo copyright Kim Henson).

More than half of UK drivers (57%) say having access to a car is more important than it was before the coronavirus pandemic, with reluctance to use public transport in the future at its highest level in 18 years, research for the *RAC's annual Report on Motoring* has found.

Two-thirds of drivers in three specific groups - young drivers, those with fewer than 10 years' driving experience and people living in the capital - are all significantly more likely to say they need a car more now than they did before March.



When it comes to needing to use a car for work, a majority (64%) still expect to drive to offices or other places of work in the future, a figure which is almost unchanged on the 67% who said they did so before the pandemic.

A little over a third of drivers (36%) said they expect to work from home more frequently in the future as a result of the coronavirus.

Despite the rise in home deliveries, nearly seven-in-10 drivers (68%) say a car is essential for carrying items like shopping, up from 54% last year – perhaps partly driven by the rise in click-and-collect services and people carrying out fewer, larger grocery shops than before the lockdown. Meanwhile, six-in-10 drivers (59%) say the car is essential for meeting up with friends and family who live elsewhere in the country, significantly up from 45% in 2019.

The research also shows the scale of the challenge to encourage drivers to switch from their vehicles to public transport for some trips even in a post-pandemic scenario – and if this was a problem before the lockdown, it's likely to be an even greater one in the future. For the first time since 2002 fewer than half of drivers (43%) say they would use their cars less, even if public transport was improved – down sharply from 57% in 2019. Taken at face value, the declining appeal of public transport seemingly represents a seismic shift compared to recent years, and suggests drivers are more wedded to their cars than they have been for a long time. It also reflects ongoing safety concerns of using potentially crowded public transport systems.

The coronavirus aside, the reasons drivers give for not opting for the bus, train or tram for some trips is consistent with previous years. Nearly half (46%) say fares are too high (2019: 50%), 43% say services don't run when they need them to (2019: 41%) and 41% say services aren't frequent enough (2019: 41%). A similar proportion (39%) complain that bus or rail lines don't run close enough to where they live or are looking to get to (2019: 38%), while nearly three-in-10 (29%) report services just take too long (2019: 25%).



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