

David Miles' Motoring News Round-up No. 8

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Photograph courtesy of Scuderia Ferrari Press Office.

MOTORING MILESTONE NEWS YOU MIGHT HAVE MISSED – Edition 8...

...By David Miles (Miles Better News Agency).

Although the lockdown measures are easing it will take time for the wheels of society to return to something like normal life. But from 1 June, after the bank holiday week, schools for certain age groups will open where they can and more employees should be returning to



work and that includes the motoring industry. So hopefully it won't be too long before we get back to reviewing new and updated cars and physically attending new model launches.

Until then I'm still sifting through automotive news items you might have missed.

On your bike now back to work

Judging by the huge crowds which have been gathering at seaside locations over the last week or so there doesn't seem too much reluctance to travel. The Government has urged us to get back to work by walking, cycling or by car or at least work from home.

[Skoda](#), whose marketing strapline is 'Simply Clever' has come up with a timely foldaway scooter designed to fit into the spare wheel well of their Scala and Kamiq models. It could be an ideal way for motorists to combine work travel by car for the main part of the journey, park and then by two wheels and a bit of leg power to finish off their daily commute – or it could be used just for fun.



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Skoda's simply clever foldaway scooter.



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The Skoda scooter weighs just 5 kg (11 lb), can carry an adult rider weighing up to 100 kgs (220 lb), it costs £120 and it's available as an accessory through retailers. Simply Clever stuff and ideally timed by Skoda.

No work, then stick with leisure pursuits – Citroën's new C3 Aircross Rip Curl model

Citroën continues its four-year collaboration with an active lifestyle brand with a new [C3 Aircross Rip Curl](#) special edition compact SUV.



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C3 Aircross Rip Curl compact SUV in action. Photograph copyright Maison Vignaux @ Continental Productions

With its quirky character the C3 Aircross compact SUV has become a significant player in its sector having won over nearly 290,000 customers in Europe. In time for summer the new C3 Aircross Rip Curl special edition is based on the Flair trim level with enhanced lifestyle specific features both inside and out.



Surf's up! Photograph copyright Maison Vignaux @ Continental Productions.

It is equipped with the award winning PSA Group's 1.2 litre, three cylinder PureTech 110 hp petrol engine with Stop&Start and with a six speed manual powertrain. It has numerous standard items of equipment to make life 'an absolute breeze' These includes Citroën Connect Nav, a 7-inch touch-sensitive tablet, Mirror Screen functionality, Citroën Connect Box and automatic climate control.

The new Citroën C3 Aircross Rip Curl special edition is available to order immediately in the UK priced from just £21,610.

Groupe PSA introduces 8-year /100,000-mile roadside assistance plan on all new electric and plug-in hybrid electric models

Groupe PSA has extended its roadside assistance plan on new full electric (EV) and plug-in hybrid vehicles (PHEV) to eight years or 100,000 miles. This is in line with the vehicle battery warranty.

The cover is available on the latest generation of plug-in hybrid and full electric models



including the new Peugeot e-208 and 3008 SUV Hybrid, new Vauxhall Corsa-e, Grandland X Hybrid and Hybrid4, new DS 3 Crossback E-Tense and the new Citroën C5 Aircross Hybrid.



[Extended roadside assistance by PSA Group for models like the new Peugeot e-208.](#)

For vehicles sold within the cover period, subsequent owners will be able to take advantage of the roadside assistance cover. Groupe PSA roadside assistance covers home and roadside repairs, as well as roadside recovery. If vehicles cannot be repaired on the road or at home, it will be transported the nearest authorised repairer, while onward travel (for up to seven passengers) to their final destination in the UK will be provided under the plan. It also



covers running out of fuel or charge, where electric vehicle owners will either be given a short charge at the roadside, or will be recovered to the nearest suitable chargepoint.

Camping it up VW style

Although the Mediterranean beaches and holidays are being opened up by France, Spain, Italy and Greece and others, due to the 14-day quarantine restrictions to be imposed by the UK Government, staycation holidays for us Brits look to be a more secure option. So caravan, camping and glamping options might be current and longer term options instead of alternatives like regimented static caravans, cottages, hotels and B&Bs.

According to media reports [Volkswagen](#) is preparing for a surge of customers looking for camper vans and it appears there is considerable interest in their £55,000 California model with a 250% increase in on-line enquiries. Interest in the larger Grand California models, priced from £72,000, has increased by 100%. These versions are based on the VW Crafter commercial vehicle vans. They are a far cry from early VW camper models, but old and new there are thought to be around 90,000 VW camper style models on UK roads.



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VW's UK family holiday answer, the California camper.

You might be a bit short on space inside a camper style vehicle but these days there is no shortage of equipment and extra cost options. More or less everything including the kitchen sink can be included. Items such as solar panels, TVs, air conditioning, fridges, elevating roofs, overhead beds, rear bicycle rack and much more are available.

England's car showrooms set to open from 1 June

The latest relaxing of the lockdown restrictions includes allowing car dealership showrooms in England to open from 1 June as long as social distancing measures are in place.



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[UK car dealership showrooms like this Kia one can open again from 1 June.](#)

Unaccompanied test drives can take place but proof of identity will be needed and I suspect a utilities bill to prove your address. There will be no coffee or tea facilities, no brochures just sales people trying to move the metal to get the car industry running again.

There are of course numerous brands which will still continue to offer on-line click and collect purchasing facilities and this applies to on-line used car outlets as well. Many brands are offering other dealer supported services. For instance [SEAT](#) has extended their warranty cover on all vehicles by three months due to the closure of retailers and [Volvo UK](#) has just introduced their Valet Service which allows customers to have their car collected and then serviced or repaired from the safety of their own home with the car being returned to the owner upon completion.



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3:20 PM



Scheduled Pickup



Service is scheduled



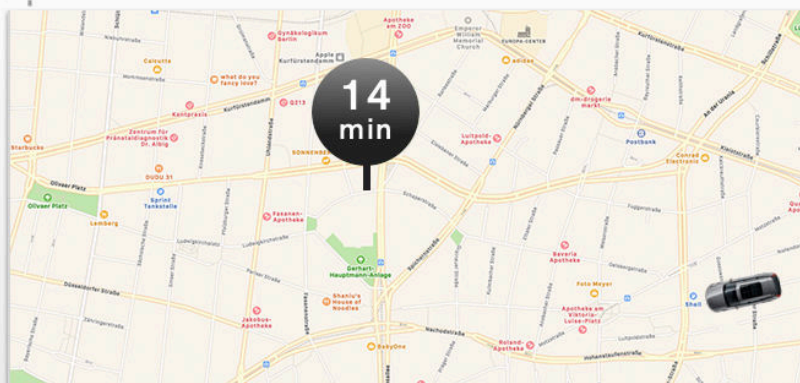
Driver is en route



Driver is nearby



Driver has arrived



Michelle

CONTACT

3:34 pm

ESTIMATED PICKUP TIME



Volvo launches its home service Valet programme.

Also [Peugeot](#), [Citroën](#), [Vauxhall](#) and [DS](#) brand owners can have their car refreshed with parent groups PSA new anti-bacterial refresh service at £99 operated by its dealers. The service operates under social distancing measures including contact-less drop-off, collection and return at home or work. The refreshed process includes cleaning the air conditioning system, replacing pollen filters, a 29-point vehicle health check of key components and full internal and external disinfection of the vehicle

Vehicle production has restarted but a financial kick-start and restructuring is needed

[Jaguar Land Rover](#), the country's biggest car maker which employs 38,000 people in the UK has started production again but is in talks with the Government to secure a rescue package of up to £1bn to grease the wheels to keep their business moving.



The first Range Rover produced under social distancing measures rolls off the production line.

Other manufacturers are in similar positions. [Renault](#) has asked the French Government for financial support so has [Fiat](#) in Italy whilst [Nissan](#) is reviewing their European manufacturing structure with job losses expected. Hopefully these will not be in the UK with rumours that Nissan's [Renault](#) partnership could see Renault Captur and Kadjar SUVs being built on the same Sunderland production lines as the Juke and Qashqai in this country as they share the same modular platforms.

France has announced a £7.1bn rescue package for their car industry with £1bn of that being earmarked to provide £5k to £6k grants to customers who buy French-built electric



cars. France wants to become Europe's principal manufacturer of electric and hybrid cars. President Macron also announced plans to move 500,000 cars the industry has in stock by offering French households a subsidy of around £4k to exchange an old vehicle for a new one.

[Groupe Renault, Nissan Motor Co and Mitsubishi Motors Corporation](#), one of the world's leading automotive alliances, has just announced a major restructuring plan for post 2025 global operations. Each brand will be responsible for developing new models and technologies creating an 'economies of scale' global operation.

In the UK Economists are warning that due to the coronavirus crisis there is likely to be persistent and damaging levels of unemployment with the jobless rate for the whole of UK business, not just the automotive sector, averaging 10% or more for the next five years. This figure would see an unemployment rate of 3.5-million UK people out of work.

At the time of writing this news review [McLaren](#) is one of the latest UK automotive company to announce job losses. They will cut their workforce by around a quarter with the loss of 1,200 jobs, under a hundred of which will be in the F1 division. A wipe-out of sales for the supercar production models has caused this financial crisis for the company which had requested a £150 million loan from the Government which was turned down. The company had been trying to raise funds by mortgaging its headquarters or some of its historic racing and road cars but existing shareholders vetoed that plan.



[Job losses for McLaren's production line.](#)

Despite that doom and gloom unemployment forecast, trade pundits are still forecasting a boom in new and used car sales once dealerships are open as pent-up demand is predicted.

I forecast a whole heap of 'sales incentives to buy' and attractive low or 0% interest finance options will be launched to stimulate the new car market. This in turn will also help refresh used car stocks on forecourts and onwards into new hands. It will be a buyer's market providing we have buyers of course. But potential customers must be worried now about future job security, financial pressures on their domestic budgets with mortgages to pay and potentially higher taxation as the Government claws back the billions of pounds it has supplied in fighting the pandemic.

A rush of new model announcements

[Renault](#) is introducing the Captur Plug-in Hybrid compact SUV priced from £30,495 and the Clio Hybrid supermini hatchback priced from £19,595. Both these new model ranges come



under the brand's new E-TECH banner.



[New Renault Captur PHEV and Clio Hybrid models.](#)

The Captur PHEV uses a 1.6 litre petrol engine with two electric motors with a power output of 160 hp and a clutchless auto transmission, providing up to 30 miles of all-electric power with CO2 emissions of 33 g/km and 188.3 mpg. The Benefit-in-Kind company car tax rate is 10%.

The Clio Hybrid has a 140 hp version of the 1.6 litre petrol engine, still with two electric motors but without the plug-in facility. Drive is also through a clutchless auto gearbox. This model is claimed to be able to drive on electric power only for 80% of an urban journey. Combined cycle fuel economy is 64.2 mpg with CO2 emissions of 98 g/km so BiK tax is rated at 22%.



Meanwhile [Volvo](#) has announced their order books are open for their first all-electric model – the XC40 Recharge Pure Electric compact SUV. Priced from £53,155 you can order now but must wait until early 2021 for delivery.



[Volvo's XC40 SUV Recharge all-electric powertrain.](#)



[New Volvo XC40 Recharge all-electric SUV.](#)

This model is capable of being driven for more than 249 miles on a single charge and fast charging gives 80% of capacity in 40 minutes. Using two electric motors producing a total of 408 hp it takes just 4.9 seconds to accelerate from zero to 62mph.

In what can only be described as a 'information technology dump' a raft of emails from [BMW](#) sailed into my inbox on just one day this week outlining model upgrades for later this year and beyond. This mass emailing to us motoring journos seems to be the future for announcements to the media. Next week, 2 June, they are digitally streaming the global launch of their new 4 Series Coupé.



The overview media info lists 48-volt technology for 37 additional models, new diesel engines for the BMW 7 Series, X3, X4, X5, X6 and X7 models. There will be new 2 Series Gran Coupé models, digital service BMW eDrive Zone for plug-in hybrid models, the new generation of the display and control system with BMW Intelligent Personal Assistant for the 3 Series, with new functions for the Driving Assistant Professional system and optimised Integral Active Steering for 7 Series and 8 Series models. No UK prices have yet been announced.



[BMW 7 Series heralds a raft of new model announcements this week.](#)



[BMW's 2 Series Gran Coupé now with a 190 hp 220d engine.](#)

For good measure more BMW emailed press releases this week announced the production of a new X2 SUV model – the xDrive 2.5e plug-in hybrid and also a revised 5 Series line-up was announced. Saloon and Touring models start arriving in July with more later this year. And yes we got 5 Series prices, Saloons £37,480 to £67,595, Touring models £39,730 to £57,485 but there are some TBC gaps for 'e' PHEV versions to be filled in yet.

[MINI](#), owned by BMW, also announced via email the updated Countryman range, the largest and most versatile model in the MINI range. The line-up includes Plug-in Hybrid ALL4 models as well as two petrol and one diesel engine options. All models have revised front end styling, new LED headlights and rear lights, new alloy wheel design plus some interior design changes. No UK prices as yet though!



MINI's updated Countryman range including the ALL4 PHEV model.

Silverstone's rounds of the delayed F1 season, will it won't it happen?

In this fast-changing and challenging world the British rounds of the F1 championship at Silverstone, which were hopefully to be held on the delayed dates of 26 July and the next race a week later on 2 August look as though they might be delayed again due to the UK's 14-day quarantine restrictions.

New dates being worked on appear to be 2 August and 9 August. The new dates for the season's opening two races in Austria are 5 July and 12 July with a possible third race now being discussed for Hungary on 19 July.



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Silverstone's F1 race dates might yet change again.
Photograph credit: @Scuderia Ferrari Press Office.

Despite the British Government's sometimes chaotic handling of the quarantine issues there seems to be strong desire by Boris to find a way for the British F1 races to happen. It might improve his and the Government's declining popularity rating.