



Record breaking Rolls-Royce takes a new turn

The luxury car maker has announced a 'high-bodied' design, currently under wraps, which hints at an SUV.

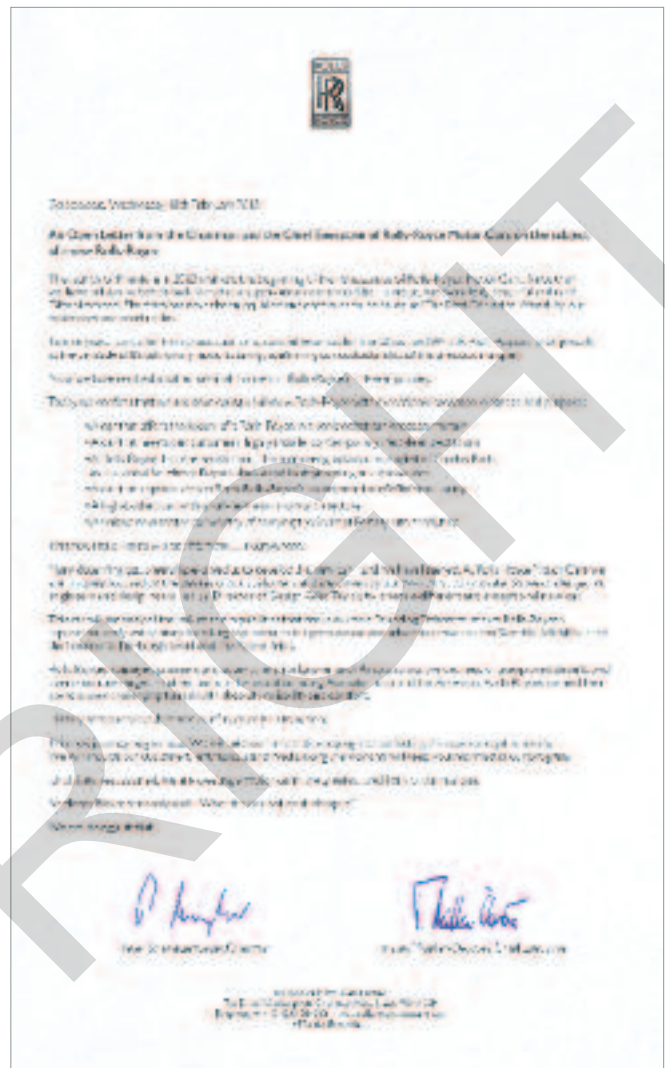
British luxury car maker Rolls-Royce is going from strength to strength, reporting record sales in 2014, its fifth consecutive record year. Sales have quadrupled since 2009 and the company has responded by doubling its employees in that time. In February it announced the launch of a new design, an “exceptional and different” new concept offering “the luxury of a Rolls-Royce in a vehicle that can cross any terrain” and which meets customers’ highly mobile, contemporary lifestyle expectations”. It will be “as much about the pioneering, adventurous spirit of Charles Rolls as it is about Sir Henry Royce’s dedication to engineering and innovation”, it said.

To celebrate the news, UK Prime Minister David Cameron visited the company’s head office and manufacturing plant at Goodwood, West Sussex, to commend an industry that employs around 150,000 in the UK and adds £14 billion to the economy. As part of a plant tour, he was presented with a letter from Rolls-Royce CEO Torsten Mueller-Oetvoes, which read: “The all-new Rolls-Royce model will herald a new chapter in the remarkable British manufacturing success story that is Rolls-Royce Motor Cars. It will guarantee long term sustainable growth, secure investment and jobs for the future.”





After a tour of the Goodwood facilities, UK Prime Minister David Cameron held an open forum with 800 of Rolls-Royce's employees.
CREDIT: ROLLS-ROYCE



The letter announcing the new design, penned by Rolls-Royce's CEO and chairman, was hand-delivered to the UK's top newspapers.
CREDIT: ROLLS-ROYCE

Sales broke through the 4,000 mark last year, the first time in the company's 111-year history. The company has created over 200 jobs in the past 18 months and now employs 1,500, primarily in skilled or highly skilled jobs. Strong sales were reported worldwide, with double-digit growth in most regions, North America (up 30%), the Middle East (up 20%) and Europe (up 40%). The US remained the company's most significant individual market and is also at the top of bespoke sales, with custom content more than doubling in 2014 – and this includes a growth in demand for leather.

Personalised service

The company pinpoints the launch of its Phantom in 2003 as the “renaissance” of Rolls-Royce. “Since then, we have set a new benchmark for what a super-luxury car should be – unique, hand-crafted, beautiful and rare.” Now nearly every Phantom and almost three in four of the Ghost models are commissioned with “bespoke personalisation”.

For each interior, the leather team use between nine and 13 high-grade bull hides from a German tannery. “It is important for us to ensure that we deliver a luxurious product, one that

celebrates the character of natural grain hides, while ensuring our yield from each hide is as high as possible,” Andrew Monachan, manager of the leather workshop, told us. “We work exclusively with a small father-and-son finishing tannery for whom our business is a large part of their output. Being matched in terms of our capacities means we can remain fast and flexible, reacting quickly to customer demands. We are also able to quickly develop new colours and manufacture batches of hides for a single, bespoke car.”

Last September the company announced plans for a new Technology and Logistics Centre at Bognor Regis, close to Goodwood. Construction of the 30,000 square-metre facility, which is due to open in 2016, is well under way with around 200 roles in technical and logistics functions to be based at the centre.

The company has not given a time frame for the new design's launch, Mr Mueller-Oetvoes merely stating: “We will take our time in developing and perfecting this new concept in luxury.” But he added: “We will include our customers, enthusiasts and media along the way and will keep you informed of our progress.”