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Mazda drives for a greater

gender balance within the UK dealer network

* Mazda establishes initiative to tackle gender balance within the UK automotive sector.
* Laura Brailey, Head of Retail Operations, to lead new diversity and inclusivity initiative.
* Eight multi-franchise dealer groups join the Automotive 30% Club co-funded by Mazda.

As part of Mazda’s commitment to encourage greater diversity within the automotive industry, the brand has introduced a *Gender Balance Initiative* to address and tackle the representation of women in front-line and senior management roles across its 122 UK dealership network. With the aim of achieving a minimum of 30 per cent representation of diverse women in key leadership roles by 2030, the initiative is a progressive step towards achieving this aim and subsequently driving industry change.

“Auto Trader Research from 2018 discovered that a third of women who visited dealerships noticed very few, if any, women in car sales showrooms, 13 per cent found the lack of diversity created an uncomfortable showroom experience and – most alarmingly – this probably contributed to 94 per cent of women saying they don’t trust car dealerships. Clearly this has to change, but research by Mazda UK in 2022 into 1,900 car dealer customers and prospects indicates that the situation has not improved in the last four years” explains Jeremy Thomson, Managing Director at Mazda UK.

Adding, “Indeed, the Mazda data shows that over a half of women and a third of men would like to see the gender balance improved. However, it is an important note that nearly all respondents said that gender tokenism and quotas are not acceptable – the staff should be appointed on capability. Our conclusion is that we must continue to make the dealership working environment more attractive and inclusive and that in itself will accelerate a natural balance.”

Working closely with the Automotive 30% Club, the Gender Balance Initiative is comprised of CEOs, Managing Directors and senior leaders from 14 leading dealership groups – four of which are existing Automotive 30% Club members. To support the initiative, Mazda has co-funded the membership fees for the new eight multi-franchise dealership group members – who represent an additional 32 Mazda dealerships and 25 per cent of the Mazda dealership network – which will support their efforts and provide resources and help in the months and years ahead.

Leading the new initiative, Laura Brailey, Head of Retail Operations at Mazda UK, said: “Mazda has been a member of the Automotive 30% Club for a number of years, and I’m proud that we have taken many steps to embed an inclusive and cohesive culture at Head Office. From our own research it’s clear our customers want change within the dealership environment, and in order to influence a positive and meaningful change, we wanted to tackle this at the very highest level.”

Adding, “Many manufacturers are aware of, and seeking to improve the gender balance issues in the retail auto sector, but we believe that by harnessing the energies, enthusiasm and influence of our larger groups and thought leaders, we can show by example how this issue can be resolved and accelerate change through the network. Within our Mazda Gender Balance Initiative cohort, the eight groups have 32 Mazda dealerships, or 25 per cent of our dealer network. Added to the six existing Automotive 30% Club members with Mazda franchises that rises to 50 dealer points, or 40 per cent of our UK dealer network. However, there is a much greater opportunity; if Mazda can support and influence a positive change, it is reasonable to think this can extend across all brands the groups have which totals to a huge 578 dealer points across the UK.”

Continuing, “It’s great to have the 14 dealer groups on this journey with us, and I hope we can use the invaluable learnings from this cohort as a catalyst to prompt other dealership groups to rethink representation and culture within their own dealerships. There is no quick fix, but we have a real opportunity here to improve the diversity and gender balance within our own circle of influence, and to retain and nurture the excellent female talent we already have in our network. By reframing our language within job descriptions and job roles, reassessing business policies, introducing mentoring schemes to uplift talent and engage allies, we aim to encourage our dealer partners to build a successful gender-balanced business and contribute to something that can really make a difference to our brand and industry.”

As one of the members of the Mazda’s Gender Balance Initiative and recent Automotive 30% Club member, Shaun Foweather, Managing Director at Stoneacre Group, said: “As a company, Stoneacre has high ambitions to increase the many upper management roles we are at present providing for the women in our business. We pride ourselves on being an inclusive and diverse company but understand that achieving equality for women in the automotive industry as a whole is still ongoing. We are proud to be part of Mazda’s Initiative and joining the 30% Automotive Club as we make headway on realising these ambitions for our female leaders.”

Julia Muir, founder of the Automotive 30% Club, commented: "I am extremely pleased that Paul Woodhouse, Trevor Leggett, Steve Petch, Tony Roberts, Neil White and Mike Berwick have all become members of the Automotive 30% Club as part of the cohort led by Mazda UK, along with Eddie Hawthorne and Shaun Foweather who were the subject of earlier announcements.

Adding, “This group of inclusive leaders are going to share best practices to accelerate the pace of change towards a gender-balance in their businesses and it will be very exciting to see how we can then share the learnings with the wider Club membership. We have already met for a full day workshop and it's clear that these leaders will make great progress. I thank them all for their commitment to their 30 by 30 strategies and I am also very grateful to Jeremy Thomson and Laura Brailey of Mazda UK for leading this collaborative approach in the network."

Fitting with this year’s theme of ‘collaboration’ at this year’s ‘Collaborating to Change The Game’ conference in May, Jeremy Thomson will join a panel of keynote speakers to discuss the importance of collaboration when creating an inclusive culture and the latest cohort of Mazda dealers to join the Automotive 30% Club.

- Ends –

\*The Mazda Gender Balance Initiative members include:

1. Green 4 Motors
2. Magna Group
3. TW White & Sons
4. Stoneacre Group
5. Johnsons Group
6. SG Petch Group
7. Sandicliffe Group
8. Arnold Clark Group
9. Perry’s Group – existing Automotive 30% Club member
10. Brayley Group – existing Automotive 30% Club member
11. Hendy Group – existing Automotive 30% Club member
12. JCT Group – existing Automotive 30% Club member
13. Burrows Group – existing Automotive 30% Club member
14. Vertu Motors – existing Automotive 30% Club member

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