McLaren CEO calls for new ‘weight race’ to help Britain lead lightweight technology development

Britain can become a world leader in lightweight materials that could help create more efficient future vehicles, Mike Flewitt, the CEO of luxury British sportscar and supercar maker McLaren Automotive has said today.

Delivering his keynote speech to automotive leaders and policy makers at the SMMT industry summit in Central London, Mr Flewitt called for a future “weight race” to replace the more traditional “power race”.

He said industry and government need to work hand in hand to develop the synergies between future powertrain development and the clever use of lighter materials that will help save weight and, therefore, reduce the energy needed to power them.

While McLaren Automotive expects to hand-assemble around 4,000 cars this year, with 90 per cent of what it makes exported to over 31 markets, Mr Flewitt believes the technology developed will also benefit the automotive industry, economy and road users more widely.

Lightweight carbon fibre has long been a part of McLaren’s DNA, the company having introduced the very first carbon fibre chassis into Formula 1 in 1981. Carbon fibre’s innate strength and lightweight properties mean that the company has never made a race car, sportscar or supercar without it since.

McLaren Automotive is itself poised to open a brand new £50m McLaren Composites Technology Centre (MCTC) in the Sheffield region later this year. The 7,000-square metre Yorkshire-based Centre will be where McLaren will innovate the process for making the ultra-lightweight and strong carbon fibre tubs at the heart of its luxury cars.

Around 45 McLaren employees are already housed at the University of Sheffield’s Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre (AMRC), innovating the process for creating lightweight tubs. When fully operational, the team is expected to grow to around 200 people with the finished tubs then sent to the McLaren Production Centre in Surrey where the company’s vehicles have been hand-assembled since 2011. It will also mean on average around 58 per cent of content by value will be from the UK, up from half.
In addition, McLaren has developed extensive knowledge of how to strip out unnecessary weight at the design process to boost performance. For example, each door of the McLaren Senna weighs less than 10 kg and such is the attention to detail, the company even formulated a lightweight paint specially to reduce the volume of liquid needed. The result is a sub-1200 kilos dry weight vehicle.

McLaren also has made significant commitments to future powertrain development having developed the world’s first ever hybrid hypercar in the McLaren P1™ and expects at least half of its fleet to be hybrid by 2022.

“We now have a fantastic opportunity for the UK to be at the very forefront of a new automotive “weight race” that can help achieve increasingly tough environmental targets. While McLaren has a long history in using lightweight materials to boost vehicle performance, it’s something we are also heavily investing in as part of our future with the opening later this year of the brand-new McLaren Composites Technology Centre in Yorkshire. It will lead to innovations in the technology going into our cars and not only provide a significant boost to that region, to jobs and the supply chain but also to the UK’s reputation for innovation.

“It is clear to us that to be successful in lightweighting, industry and Government need to continue to work closely to ensure we all capitalise on the benefits for the sector, for the UK in general and also for vehicle owners who will increasingly demand more efficient products that deliver the driving attributes they expect.”

Mike Flewitt, Chief Executive Officer of McLaren Automotive.

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Notes to Editors:
A selection of high resolution images accompanying this release is available to download from the McLaren Automotive media site – cars.mclaren.press

About McLaren Automotive:
McLaren Automotive is a creator of luxury, high-performance sportscars and supercars.

The company, launched in 2010, is now the largest part of the McLaren Group.

Every vehicle is hand-assembled at the McLaren Production Centre (MPC) in Woking, Surrey, England.

The company has three defined product families: Sports Series, Super Series and Ultimate Series which are retailed through over 80 retailers in 30 markets around the world.

McLaren is a pioneer that continuously pushes the boundaries. In 1981, it introduced lightweight and strong carbon fibre chassis into Formula 1 with the McLaren MP4/1. Then in 1993 it designed and built the McLaren F1 road car - the company has not built a car without a carbon fibre chassis since. As part of the Ultimate Series, McLaren was the first to deliver a hybrid hypercar, the McLaren P1™.
Announced in 2016, the company's Track22 business plan will see the company invest £1 billion in research and development to deliver 15 new cars or derivatives by the end of 2022, of which at least half will be hybrids.

2017 saw the company launch further models in line with Track22 including the second-generation Super Series, the 570S Spider and the McLaren Senna.

To support the development, engineering and manufacture of its range of innovative sportscars and supercars, McLaren Automotive partners with world leading companies to provide specialist expertise and technology. These include AkzoNobel, Kenwood, Pirelli and Richard Mille.

**McLaren Group:**
The McLaren Group is a global leader in luxury high performance and technology and comprises three principal businesses: Automotive, Racing and Applied Technologies.

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