

# Back in the game



**FLEET FOCUS:**  
Renault expects  
fleet to account  
for 60% of new  
Megane sales

## Renault's revival continues with a new generation Megane which could reboot its fleet penetration

Andrew Charman

**T**he arrival in showrooms this month of Renault's fourth-generation Megane is one of the brand's most significant launches following its product and dealer cull back in 2012.

After that low point Renault dealers are enjoying strong sales on the back of the latest Clio and all-new Captur and Kadjar crossovers. However, success in the C-segment is crucial to Renault's continuing growth prospects.

The Megane has long been a significant player in the sector with 560,000 sold in the UK since the first version launched in 1989.

The new Megane is built on the Renault-Nissan Alliance CLF platform, which also underpins the brand's other two C-segment contenders: the Kadjar and forthcoming Scenic MPV. Visually the Megane continues the design language of Renault's most recent launches, in profile being both longer and lower than the outgoing third-generation car, with wider tracks and distinctive edge lighting signatures both front and rear.

Inside the recipe was to create a cockpit-like feel, with all controls arranged around the driver, while the most notable element

is the 8.7 inch portrait style touchscreen. This is offered as standard from the Dynamic S trim level and allows the easy selection of satellite navigation, audio or car settings without resorting to numerous sub menus.

The Megane also features new technology elements plus the quality finish, cascaded down from Renault's larger models such as the D-segment Talisman which will not be coming to the UK. This includes the availability of Multi-Sense, which allows owners to personalise a range of elements in the car from the driving modes to the engine sound, interior lighting and even the speed of the climate control fan.

"We will promote the Megane mostly on the technology available across the range," said Megane product manager Yann Le Graet.

Indeed, the advanced technology played a crucial part in Renault's pre-launch dealer training.

"A highlight of the training was four-control; our rear-wheel-steer system (available on GT models). Dealers were able to experience what it does while they also spent a huge chunk of time learning about the various driver aids. You don't have to sell such technology because the customer will already know about it, but it is important the dealer knows what it does."

This technology and the availability of the best-selling dCi 110 diesel amongst the initial four-strong engine line-up are also regarded as crucial to rebuilding Renault's fleet presence, effectively abandoned in the 2012 restructure. Mike Dickens, appointed head of fleet in 2014, has been rolling out a new fleet strategy to the dealer network

### Behind the wheel

At first glance the new Megane is far more striking visually than its predecessor, with a low, purposeful stance and bold front-end design emphasised by the edgy signature of the LED lights.

Inside there has certainly been a step up in fit and finish. The seats are comfortable, the controls well-placed. The highlight, however, is the Volvo XC90-style portrait-oriented centre console touchscreen, standard on Dynamique S Nav models, an option on lower trims. It's easy to use and even easier to read.

We drove the dCi110 model expected to both be the range best seller and revive the brand's fleet presence. It's a familiar engine, already in the Kadjar, and does not disappoint in this environment, offering excellent levels of refinement whether on urban roads or at speed on motorways.

The steering is light and easy in use, though with not quite enough feel to be as fun to drive as class leaders such as the Ford Focus. But once one includes an impressive standard equipment list, the Megane will certainly find its way onto consideration lists both retail and fleet.

in readiness for the brand's new C-segment models.

"Dealers with the opportunity to sell more than 150 local fleet units a year must now have a dedicated salesperson fully in tune with all fleet requirements such as selling business finance, and fully knowledgeable of the product," he said.

"Those selling up to 150 units must have a nominated person, who may be a retail salesperson but will receive the same training.

"We are giving the whole network the professionalism to sell the products and effectively doubling our fleet network. We'd taken our foot off the gas in this area in the past because we didn't have the products coming through."

Renault expects the new Megane will return a 60/40 fleet/retail sales split despite the previous model never making a significant impact in the company car sector.

The brand, however, is less willing to predict future overall volumes for the Megane, arguing that it is difficult to compare likely sales to the launch years of the previous version as the segment has changed so much since.

"It's a far better car than the Megane 3, a better package that will appeal to a wider audience, and especially the fleet sector – it has improved our credibility," said Le Graet. **MT**

### FACTFILE

#### Renault Megane

**Models:** Petrol 1.2 130PS, 1.6 205PS. Diesel 1.5 110PS, 1.6 130PS. Diesel 1.5 110PS hybrid assist and 1.6 165PS to follow in 2017

**Prices:** £16,600-£25,500

**On sale:** July 2016

**Sales forecast:** Not stated

**Sales** 60/40 Fleet/Retail

**Rivals:** Ford Focus, Vauxhall Astra, Peugeot 308





# Hi-tech showcase



REVAMPED: The A3 has benefited from a mid-life technology upgrade

## The latest incarnation of the Audi 3 sees significant improvements in connected and smart technology

Andrew Charman

**T**he A3 is an important car for Audi dealers. It is the brand's biggest UK seller and this latest refresh brings two new engines, a revised exterior and most notably, a raft of new technology.

There will be two new petrol engines. A 1.0-litre of 115PS that is Audi's first-ever three-cylinder unit and the new entry point to the range and a 2.0-litre with 190PS. Otherwise the only other mechanical change is a new S tronic gearbox with seven speeds instead of six.

Subtle styling changes feature, most notably a revised front-end giving the car a wider look and distinctive new Xenon headlamps with Matrix LED versions an option for the first time.

Principally, however, the revamp focuses on the one area that has moved on rapidly in the past four years: technology. According to Audi UK sales operation manager James Allitt, the lack of mechanical upgrades is not a concern, with the four body styles and six engine variants, offering power outputs up to 190PS and CO<sub>2</sub> outputs down to 99g/km still providing the versatility the market requires.

The Virtual Cockpit is impressive,

displaying a large navigation map or even Google Earth imagery across the dash at the touch of a button. There is also Apple CarPlay, Android Mirrorlink and wireless charging and a host of new driver assistance systems, including traffic jam and rear cross traffic assist.

So do buyers rate this new technology above traditional performance and efficiency? Allitt thinks not. "Technology is undoubtedly increasingly important to customers, but I wouldn't say that it is necessarily more important than performance or economy. It is simply an additional item to consider," he said.

"Lives today are all about being connected and it makes sense that people want to see this in their cars too. Developments such as the smartphone Interface or the Audi Phone Box are examples of how technology can genuinely make life easier day-to-day."

The rise of technology has placed new demands on dealers, however, with Audi Centre staff now undergoing specific technology training alongside model-specific product training.

This is becoming more important as customers arrive in centres well informed about their potential purchase, having researched it

online. And, according to Allitt the brand is seeking to improve this process. A forthcoming initiative provisionally titled "Quote my Audi" will knit together key pieces of information – configuration, finance and a part-exchange valuation – to provide a detailed quote to the network and initiate a direct conversation between the customer and their centre.

Dealers took delivery of all four body styles and all five trim levels of the A3 at launch, as well as the S3 sporting versions. The two new engines will follow later in the year, as will the latest Sportback e-tron plug-in hybrid model, with quoted combined cycle fuel consumption of 176mpg and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions levels of just 37g/km. With this line-up Audi expects the A3 to remain fully competitive against rivals such as Mercedes' A-Class and the BMW 1 and 2 Series. This confidence is well placed. **MT**

### Behind the wheel

Dynamically the latest A3 is familiar territory. Whether powered by the 1.4 petrol engine that most retail customers will choose, the 1.6 TDI that will be the fleet staple, or its larger 2.0-litre sibling, the A3 is highly accomplished on the road.

The car rides with comfort no matter which of the wheel options is chosen, steers with confidence and the engines provide a mostly impressive combination of power and refinement – though in terms of the latter the diesels are beginning to be outshone by the petrol unit.

The styling changes enhance the model without making a radical statement, but the technology upgrades are significant particularly the Virtual Cockpit – it's user-friendly and impressive in operation. The smartphone compatibility upgrades are also a welcome addition in today's connected environment, but regular Audi drivers will likely be equally satisfied by the updates to the MMI system controls which are easier to use than previously.

### FACTFILE

#### Audi A3

**Models:** Petrol 1.4 150PS, Diesel 1.6 110PS, 2.0 150PS, Petrol 1.0 115PS and 2.0 190PS to follow

**Prices:** £23,165 - £32,125

**On sale:** July 2016

**Sales forecast:** 48,000

**Retail/Fleet split:** 60/40

**Rivals:** BMW 1/2 Series, Mercedes A-Class, Volvo V40







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