



Media Information
30 September

Ian Robertson: “MINI is returning to its roots.”

Paris. Ian Robertson, Member of the Board of Management, Sales and Marketing BMW Group, speaks about the importance of motorsport for the MINI brand, the goals in the World Rally Championship and the MINI Countryman, on which the MINI WRC is based.

Mr Robertson, MINI is back in motorsport. What does this move mean for the brand?

Ian Robertson: “Our involvement in the World Rally Championship effectively sees MINI returning to its roots. In the early years, success in the world of motorsport contributed significantly to the rapid rise of the MINI. Back then, people saw that this little car not only looked good in everyday traffic, but also had a sporty side. This has not changed since then. We chose the World Rally Championship for our stage in order to prove the sportiness of MINI cars to today's generation of drivers. The commitment also reinforces the key values of the MINI brand, ‘excitement’ and ‘energy’ as well underlining the manly side of the brand.”

Why is the MINI brand so well suited to rallying?

Robertson: “On the one hand, MINI can look back on a unique success story. On the other hand, MINI is the epitome of excitement for millions of fans around the world and thrills them with its energy. This is precisely what we are able to authentically and sustainably represent through our motorsport involvement in the World Rally Championship, with its big TV and media presence. Thrilling rally events, ultimate performances by man and machine, and as much success as possible, of course: motorsport is pure emotion – just as MINI is for its fans.”

How are the roles distributed in the World Rally Championship involvement?

Robertson: “MINI is the manufacturer of the MINI Countryman series car. It forms the basis for the MINI WRC, which has been developed by Prodrive since the start of 2009. MINI is also playing the role of Team Partner. The 1.6-litre Di turbo engine was developed by BMW Motorsport in Munich, based on the new FIA Super2000 regulations. Prodrive is also responsible for our appearances in the WRC and the production of customer rally cars.”

What goals have you set for the first season in 2011?

Robertson: “Anyone wanting to be successful in a World Championship must first gain experience and put in a lot of hard work. We will do that together with our partner Prodrive. David Richards’ team is very familiar with the World Rally Championship, so we can start at a very high level. Six rallies are planned for next year. In 2012 we will compete for the full season. It goes without saying we

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want to be competitive as quickly as possible, and I am optimistic we will succeed."

When do you think you will be able to challenge Ford and Citroën for the title?

Robertson: "Experience is a very important factor in motorsport. For that reason it is essential that we learn as much as possible within a very short time, in order to make up ground on our rivals. The new regulations mean the gap to the top is smaller than it would have been another time. We want to annoy the opposition as soon as possible. You can plan your own performance in motorsport, but not a title win. All you can do is work as hard as possible to move closer to your goal. Our goal is to win the World Championship."

What are the outstanding characteristics of the MINI Countryman, on which the MINI WRC is based?

Robertson: "The MINI Countryman is a car, the type of which there has never been before in the history of MINI. As a crossover it combines the classic MINI concept with the characteristics of a Sports Activity Vehicle – in a MINI that is at home far beyond the boundaries of the urban environment. It is the first MINI with four-wheel drive, which makes it predestined for the World Rally Championship. With its four doors and four seats it fits the motto: MINI on the outside, maxi on the inside. Because it is a true MINI, the Countryman is particularly low on fuel and emissions."

What will MINI's involvement in the Rally World Championship cost?

Robertson: "The costs of developing a car and running it in the World Rally Championship have fallen significantly since the introduction of the new FIA Super2000 regulations. We assume the costs will be about 25 percent lower than would have been the case in previous years. This was a huge influence on our decision to become involved. The 1.6-litre turbo engine was developed by BMW for use in a wide variety of fields. In addition, the sale of customer rally cars has a positive effect on the total calculation. The WRC offers MINI an attractive platform – with manageable costs. The cost/performance ratio is excellent."

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