BMW Group

Corporate Communications

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Press Conference

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- Check against delivery -

Ladies and gentlemen,

My colleague Ian Robertson has just explained why we established BMW i.

But a new brand or sub-brand only really comes to life through its products. Today, it’s my great pleasure to present the first two BMW i products to you.

Allow me to begin with the BMW i3, which you will know by its working title of Megacity Vehicle.

As you can see, we are naming our BMW i vehicles by the same system as we name the products of the parent brand, BMW: each model name consists of the letter “i” followed by the number of the model series.

The BMW i3 will be our first all-electric motorcar for urban areas around the world. Increasing urbanisation is ushering in a new type of mobility. For us, as car producers, this means not just new cars but new ways of thinking, developing and producing them.

This new way is exactly the way we have chosen to go with the BMW i3. We have designed it purely and specifically as an electric car – to meet the specific mobility needs of urban drivers. It is based on a revolutionary vehicle architecture: the LifeDrive concept. Its body consists of two independent modules that are separated from each other horizontally.

The Drive Module consists of an aluminium chassis. This accommodates the powertrain. In other words, it accommodates the lithium-ion battery, the performance electronics and a compact but powerful electric motor. By the way, this is BMW’s first electric powertrain for series vehicles.

On top of the Drive Module sits the Life Module, a passenger cell made of carbon fibre reinforced plastic, or CFRP for short.

This extremely light but very stiff and rigid material has previously been used in racing, aviation and space travel. But so far, it has never been used for structural elements in large-scale automotive production.

We have spent ten years building up our knowledge of CFRP in our lightweight engineering centre in Landshut. We are now ready to move into industrial production.

With the BMW i3, we are launching the world’s first major series vehicle with a CFRP body. That alone is something of a revolution in the world of automotive production.

CFRP has one major advantage: by using carbon in the LifeDrive Architecture, we are offsetting almost completely the additional weight of the battery. Compared with an electric car based on a conventional architecture, we are saving more than 300kg.

The BMW i3 is ideal for day-to-day commuting in megacities. It has compact dimensions but still offers a generous sense of space. But we are not launching our new BMW i sub-brand with just one car.

We are going to launch another product as well. It’s an exciting yet sustainable model for longer drives outside the city, and it’s extremely dynamic and efficient:

It’s the BMW i8, an extremely dynamic automobile combining the performance of a sports car with the fuel consumption levels of a compact. If that sounds familiar to you, then you are right: we first presented the i8 at the IAA 2009 – as the BMW Vision EfficientDynamics concept car. We presented the first driveable prototype last autumn in Leipzig.

As a plug-in hybrid, the BMW i8 represents hybridisation in its most sophisticated form. Its large, high-voltage storage battery combines with a high-performance electric motor to allow purely electric motoring for short and medium distances. The big thing about the plug-in concept is that this car gets its power from the mains, ideally in the shape of green energy from regenerative sources.

The compact, turbo charged combustion engine kicks in only when it is needed – for more dynamic driving cross-country, for example.

Both the BMW i3 and the BMW i8 are technological highlights representing the characteristic qualities of BMW i:

They are tailor-made especially to carry alternative powertrains. Their “purpose built design” makes use of extremely lightweight materials and engineering. And as a result, they offer superior driving dynamics and a considerably longer range for electrical motoring. In addition, we are taking special care to achieve sustainability along the value chain.

Both the BMW i3 and the BMW i8 will be produced at our plant in Leipzig.

By 2013 we will have invested some €400 million in new buildings and equipment there. We will also create around 800 jobs. Leipzig is going to be our centre of competence for the production of zero-emissions electric cars. And in terms of environmental protection and the careful use of natural resources, we have set our sights high:

We are going to reduce the amount of energy we use to produce each car by 50%. We are going to bring water consumption down by 70%. And, on top of that, we are going to obtain all the energy needed to assemble these cars from regenerative sources.

The mobility of the future will be made in Leipzig, where production of the BMW i3 is due to start in 2013. The BMW i8 will follow shortly afterwards.

So, what else can we expect from BMW i?

BMW i is going to offer innovative products. These will extend our product range considerably, especially in terms of sustainability and lifestyle.

With the BMW i3 and the BMW i8, the first two representatives of our new brand have been determined. The two cars appear very different at first sight. But they actually have a lot in common: emotional design and highly sophisticated alternative drive systems that enable them to cover long distances purely by electrical means. All this is perfectly suited to our BMW i tagline “Born electric”. They also benefit from extremely lightweight construction and a clever package, thanks to the LifeDrive Architecture and the CFRP passenger cell.

Another thing is also quite clear: there is still plenty of scope for more products. The number 3 is not the smallest number, and the number 8 is not the largest. And there is plenty of space in between.

The spectrum of BMW i ranges from eco-friendly mobility concepts for urban areas to sporty lifestyle products.

I can assure you: BMW i is an exciting brand with extraordinary and fascinating products. As the Board Member for Development with the BMW Group, I am very pleased to be directly involved in building up this sub-brand and its products.