



Media Information  
27 July 2010

## MINI set to join World Rally Championship from 2011.

**Munich.** MINI is making a comeback on the international rally circuit. From 2011, the brand will compete at selected rounds of the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC) and will go on to contest the entire season from 2012 onwards. This involvement is planned for several years.

The car charged with this task is the MINI Countryman WRC, which is being developed by Prodrive, in close cooperation with MINI, and is based on the production model. The powerful heart of the racing car is a 1.6-litre, four-cylinder turbo-charged engine from BMW Motorsport. The car complies with the new Super2000 regulations put in place by the International Automobile Federation (FIA), which stipulate the use of turbo engines with 1,600 cc displacement and four-wheel drive combined with an increased emphasis on road relevant technologies. The result is a significant 25 per cent reduction in overall costs. The first test drive for the MINI Countryman WRC, which will also be available to customer teams, is planned for autumn 2010.

This decision sees MINI continue its success story in the world of rallying. In the 1960s, the MINI Cooper S caused a sensation with victories at the legendary Monte Carlo Rally. The company also tasted success on many occasions in the European Rally Championship. Having already demonstrated the sporty character of its models in many countries in the MINI CHALLENGE, the brand is now taking its presence in motorsport to a new level with the commitment to the WRC.

Ian Robertson, member of the Board of Management of BMW AG, responsible for Sales and Marketing, says: "I am delighted MINI will be represented on one of the most popular stages in international motorsport. The success enjoyed on the rally circuit has made a vital contribution to the image of the brand. MINI customers have always shown great interest in motorsport. I am convinced we will add a few more chapters to our success story in rallying. The MINI Countryman provides an excellent basis, from which to create a competitive racing car for the world championship. In Prodrive, we have a strong and experienced partner. We will work hard together over the coming months to ensure we get the project on track right from the word go."

"This is a very exciting new motorsport programme," said Prodrive Chairman, David Richards. "During the 1960s MINI captured the imagination of the world when the tiny car took on the might of V8 powered Fords and won what was then one of the toughest motorsport events, the 4000km Monte Carlo rally. I believe our new MINI will become a firm favourite of the latest generation of rally fans, just as it is adored by its millions of owners across the world. We already have a significant number of confirmed customer orders for the new MINI rally car with the first deliveries scheduled for the start of the 2011 season."

Company  
Bayerische  
Motoren Werke  
Aktiengesellschaft

Postal Address  
BMW AG  
80788 München

Telephone  
+49 (0)89 382 30641

Internet  
[www.bmwgroup.com](http://www.bmwgroup.com)



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Prodrive has been working on developing the MINI Countryman WRC since early 2009. The company was formed in 1984 by Richards, who won the World Rally Championship as co-driver to Ari Vatanen (FI) three years earlier. Based in Banbury (GB), Prodrive has developed into a leading independent company in the motorsport and automobile sector under Richards' guidance, and today employs over 500 staff. Prodrive's many successes currently include six overall victories in the World Rally Championship, five titles in the British Touring Car Championship and three class victories at the Le Mans 24 Hours (FR).

BMW was present when the World Rally Championship made its debut back in 1973. Achim Warmbold (DE) and Jean Todt (FR) tasted victory in their BMW 2002 at the Alpenfahrt Rally in Austria. However, MINI's tradition in this discipline stretches back even further: Pat Moss (GB) clinched the first victory with the MINI 850 at the 1959 Mini Miglia National Rally. MINI ultimately enjoyed its finest hours at the Monte Carlo Rally in 1964, 1965 and 1967: the MINI Cooper S celebrated three overall victories at the most iconic rallying event in the world. Paddy Hopkirk (IR, 1964), Timo Mäkinen (FI, 1965) and Rauno Aaltonen (FI, 1967) joined the list of winners at this prestigious event. In 1965, "Rally Professor" Aaltonen also won the European Rally Championship. Tony Ambrose (GB) and Mäkinen finished second and third to round off an excellent overall result for the MINI Cooper S. In addition, MINI drivers also enjoyed many individual wins at renowned rallies throughout Europe. The last BMW World Rally Championship victory was achieved in 1987 in Corsica by Bernard Béguin (FR) driving a BMW M3 which was built and run by Prodrive.

From 2011, over 40 years down the line, the MINI Countryman WRC will be charged with adding further chapters to this success story. It bridges the gap between the classic MINI concept and a contemporary Sports Activity Vehicle. The brand's first model to feature four doors and a wide-opening tailgate, it offers more space – which can be used in a wide variety of ways – to go with its raised seating position and optimised ride comfort. Plus, the "go-kart" feeling for which MINI is a byword has been preserved and takes on a new dimension with the optional MINI ALL4 all-wheel-drive system. The MINI Countryman expresses the defining virtues of the brand in terms of design, premium quality, handling, efficiency and the scope for customisation – and does so in an absorbingly individual way.

The next step down from the racing version is the MINI Cooper S Countryman. With its twin-scroll turbocharger and direct injection now complemented by fully variable valve management, the 1.6-litre four-cylinder petrol engine in the range-topping model offers by far the best balance between output and fuel consumption in its displacement class. The engine generates an impressive 135 kW/184 bhp and allows the MINI Cooper S Countryman to accelerate from 0 to 100 km/h in 7.6 seconds. Furthermore, the MINIMALISM concept sees wide-ranging technology designed to reduce fuel consumption and emissions – such

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## Corporate Communications



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as Brake Energy Regeneration, the Auto Start/Stop function, Shift Point Display and the need-based operation of ancillary components – fitted as standard and in model-specific combinations.



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The MINI Cooper S Countryman and MINI Cooper D Countryman can be ordered as an option with MINI ALL4 permanent all-wheel drive. Here, an electromagnetic centre differential positioned directly on the final drive varies the distribution of power seamlessly between the front and rear axles. In normal driving conditions up to 50 per cent of the drive is sent to the rear wheels, in extreme situations as much as 100 per cent. The result is a new, traction-led expression of the agile handling for which MINI is famed.

For questions please contact:

Jörg Kottmeier, BMW Corporate Affairs, Head of Sports Communications, Office: +49 (0) 89 382 23401, Mobile: +49 (0) 170 5666 112, joerg.kottmeier@bmw.de

Ingo Lehbrink, BMW Corporate Affairs, Sports Communications, Office: +49 (0)89 382 76003, Mobile: +49 (0) 176 20340224, ingo.lehbrink@bmw.de

Cypselus von Frankenberg, Head of MINI Product Communications;  
Office: +49 (0)89 382 30641, Mobile: +49 (0)170 7965284, Cypselus.von-Frankenberg@mini.com

Media Website: [www.press.bmwgroup.com](http://www.press.bmwgroup.com)  
E-mail: [presse@bmw.de](mailto:presse@bmw.de)