

VAUXHALL BIDS FOR 18 SPEED ENDURANCE RECORDS IN ACTION-PACKED 24 HOURS

LUTON, UK, October 25, 2013 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Luton - Vauxhall](#) is awaiting FIA and MSA confirmation that its attempt to clinch a total of 12 World and six National Speed Endurance Records in a standard production Astra has been successful.

- 12-man team attempts to clinch World & National records in production Astras
- Nearly 3,000 miles covered in 24 hours at maximum speed on Millbrook's banking
- Exceptional reliability from the cars, with only 22 minutes downtime in 24 hours
- National 24hr class record un-broken for over 20 years; World record never set before



At just after 4pm on October 5, the first of two Ellesmere Port-built Vauxhall Astra 2.0 CDTi Hatches approached the start line on Millbrook Proving Ground's High Speed Bowl. Precisely 24 hours later it crossed the same marker, having covered nearly 3,000 miles at an average, yet-to-be ratified speed of 125mph.

Twelve drivers, comprising nine motoring journalists and three Vauxhall and Opel staff, each drove a total of four hours, split between the two cars. Only one tyre change was required per car, no engine oil was consumed at all, and despite completing nearly 1,500 laps of the two-mile banked circuit with the cars' throttles nailed to the floor, both cars completed the attempt with a mere 22 minutes downtime, in addition to refuelling and driver changes.

The attempt was a culmination of a year's work by Vauxhall and its sister company, Opel, to challenge two sets of speed endurance records: those in FIA's* 1600-2000cc forced-induction diesel production car class, as well as the MSA's* 1500-2000cc forced-induction diesel production car class. While world records had been set for 1, 6 and 12 hours, no one had cracked the 24 hour benchmark. And at a national level, the time and distance records had stood for more than two decades, with the 24 hour record set at 100.2mph since 1992.

Proving the Astra's exceptional reliability and driveability in extreme conditions was the main focus of the record programme from the start. 'We chose the 165PS 2.0 CDTi Astra for its mix of strong performance and economy,' said Simon Hucknall, Vauxhall's PR Manager. 'But to be

subjected to 24 hours of flat-out driving on the challenging top lane of Millbrook's High Speed Bowl it needed to be ultra-reliable, predictable and safe for our drivers.'

Leaving nothing to chance, Vauxhall's engineering team were tasked early on with creating data that simulated the cars being driven a maximum speed for 24 hours on Millbrook's banked track. 'We already had a lot of faith in the 2.0 CDTi engine being up to the job,' said Mariella Vogler, Chief Engineer for Astra. 'But even during the car's development, we'd never encountered a test like this. It was therefore vital that we establish the overall robustness of the powertrain prior to the test, and it passed with flying colours.'

Millbrook's High Speed Bowl is a two-mile, constant radius track that is steeply banked towards its fifth and fastest lane. As well as the pounding given to the cars' powertrains while drivers were constantly maxing out at around 130mph, the stress put on their suspension and tyres was intense, due to the forces exerted by the track's banking.

Working with tyre supplier, Michelin, Vauxhall's priority was to minimise the risk of a high-speed blow-out. 'We worked closely with Michelin right from the start to ensure that the Astra's production-spec tyres could run the course,' said Volker Strycek, former DTM race driver and Director of Performance Cars & Motorsport at Opel/Vauxhall. 'We carried out 500 miles of testing at Millbrook in an Astra in July, and it was clear that the Michelin Pilot Super Sports fitted to the car were more than capable of lasting.'

Volker not only brought his motorsport expertise to the project, but also a four-strong pit crew, normally found managing race cars at the 'Ring, rather than Astras at the 'Brook. The crew worked closely with Vauxhall's own press garage team to undertake quick and efficient re-fuelling and drivers changes throughout the day and night.

In order to comply with the FIA's stringent rules set down for record attempts, Vauxhall worked closely with the UK's Motor Sports Association, who guided the company through the myriad regulations. 'The FIA is quite rightly concerned with manufacturers entering into the spirit of record attempts, and not fielding "specially prepared" cars,' said Hucknall. 'As a result, MSA observers visited the Ellesmere Port plant, where the record Astras were built, and tracked their assembly from body-in-white right through to final audit. After that, the cars were fitted with roll cages, Corbeau race seats and Luke harnesses, then sealed and locked in a secure compound until the attempt. Believe me, two more standard production Astras don't exist!'

Final ratification of the FIA and MSA records is still a few weeks away, but Vauxhall is quietly confident that the Astra's performance and the company's painstaking adherence to the FIA/MSA's regulations will result in an entry into the record books.

'This is real testament to the durability, safety and performance of the Astra in extreme conditions, way beyond what a normal driver would experience,' said Duncan Aldred, Chairman & Managing Director of Vauxhall. 'Sometimes too much focus is put on the final one per cent of a

car's handling, or its 0-60mph time, but for most buyers exceptional reliability and secure, safe handling are paramount. Above all, this test sets out to prove these virtues.'

Upon ratification by the FIA and MSA, Vauxhall will publish full details of the 18 records it has attempted to set and break.

To view a short video of the attempt go to: <http://youtu.be/dl-LKZ3MI00>

*FIA – Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile; MSA – Motor Sports Association

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