

JCB HYDROMAX WORLD LAND SPEED RECORD ATTEMPT SURGES AHEAD

British engineering giant JCB's bid to set a world hydrogen land speed record is surging ahead - with the car reaching speeds of 177mph in testing yesterday.

STAFFORDSHIRE, UNITED KINGDOM, June 17, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- British engineering giant [JCB](#)'s bid to set a world [hydrogen](#) land speed record is surging ahead - with the car now built and testing under way. The company unveiled its aim to set the record with the unveiling of the JCB [Hydromax](#) car - powered by two JCB hydrogen digger engines - at its World HQ in Staffordshire on May 12th.



JCB Hydromax in UK testing ahead of Bonneville Hydrogen World Land Speed Record attempt

Now just over a month later, the building of the car is complete and full testing is under way at RAF Wittering in Cambridgeshire, England where it reached a speed of 177mph yesterday driven by Wing Commander Andy Green OBE.

Next month the car will be flown to Bonneville, Utah, USA in preparation for its record bids on the Salt Flats – including an attempt to set a Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) world hydrogen land speed record. The FIA is the global governing body for motor sport and the federation for mobility organisations worldwide.

JCB Chairman Anthony Bamford has spearheaded JCB's £100 million investment to develop hydrogen powered internal combustion engines. JCB diggers powered by the technology are now rolling off production lines.

Lord Bamford said today: "Twelve months ago this car was a set of drawings being discussed by a room full of engineers. Today it is a reality and on wheels, running, and being tested in the UK. The team has done a wonderful job to get us to this point. Our focus now turns to the real challenge: setting a world hydrogen land speed record in Bonneville."

JCB Engineering Director Ryan Ballard, who is leading the project, said: "More than 150,000 hours of work has got us to this point; the next phase is where we find out what the car actually does, not what we think it will do. Every run, every refuel and every tyre change we complete in the UK is one our team won't be doing for the first time on the Salt Flats. Our goal is simple: to arrive at Bonneville fully prepared, with a car and a crew that know exactly what they are doing."

President of the FIA, H.E. Mohammed Ben Sulayem said: "JCB Hydromax's first official test marks an important milestone on the road to a new hydrogen land speed record. This is a big achievement and I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to Lord Bamford and the entire JCB team. Through this world record attempt JCB is pushing the boundaries of engineering innovation and hydrogen technology, demonstrating the role motorsport can play to advance the future of mobility. I look forward to seeing the project continue to develop ahead of its world record attempt in August."

The initial technical partner meeting for the project with JCB, Prodrive, Ricardo and Xtrac was held on June 5th 2025 and almost a year to the day, the 32-foot JCB Hydromax rolled on to the tarmac at RAF Wittering for its very first run under its own hydrogen power. This marked the start of a full UK test programme covering shakedown runs, hydrogen refuelling drills and pit-stop rehearsals.

The JCB Hydromax is powered by two of the company's own production-based hydrogen internal combustion engines, producing a combined 1,600 bhp - the same engines now powering JCB diggers. It has been built to a rigorously engineered design. Around one kilometre of wiring runs through the car, while there has been extensive use of 3D-printed components to keep weight down and packaging tight. The crankshaft is the same one JCB uses in its 448 hydrogen and diesel engines — highlighting perfectly how the land speed car is built on production hardware. Keeping that hardware alive at full power is the key engineering challenge. The pistons alone require one litre of cooling oil every second - as much oil flow as the rest of the engine combined - to stop them overheating. A specially developed exhaust valve technology handles the temperatures generated by 1,600 bhp of hydrogen combustion. Each titanium turbo compressor spins at more than 150,000 rpm at close to 300°C, pumping the equivalent of a standard bathtub of air every half-second.

Nonetheless, the figures at the exhaust are striking. On a full record run, JCB Hydromax will consume just over two kilograms of hydrogen - and produce 18 litres of water.

The UK testing puts every system under load for the first time: the powertrain, four-wheel drive transmission, clutch, brakes, cooling and bespoke control electronics. Hydrogen refuelling drills bring the pit crew, the on-car systems and the fuel supply together at full pace, while pit-stop and tyre-change rehearsals will sharpen the turnaround times that, at Bonneville, can decide whether a record run goes ahead or not.

At Bonneville, JCB Hydromax will be driven by Andy Green - the fastest man on earth at 763.035 mph, the only person to break the sound barrier on land, and the driver of JCB Dieselmix when it set the FIA world diesel land speed record of 350.092 mph at Bonneville in August 2006. That record still stands.

Following UK testing, the team will travel to Bonneville for SpeedWeek, the world's leading land speed racing event, run by the Southern California Timing Association (SCTA). The team will then remain at the Salt Flats to pursue officially recognised world records under the FIA.

JCB aims to beat the 350 mph JCB Dieselmix record with the JCB Hydromax – a car which is lighter, more powerful and faster than its 2006 predecessor. JCB's record attempt comes ahead of the opening of the company's new \$500 million, one million sq. ft, 400-acre factory in San Antonio, Texas, which will employ 1,500 people manufacturing machines for the US market.

JCB has a long history of pushing the limits of speed. In 2019, the JCB Fastrac tractor was crowned the world's fastest tractor at 135.191 mph, and in 2014 the JCB GT set the world record for the fastest backhoe loader at 72.58 mph.

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