

MORE than 123 MILLION working hours are lost every year as UK motorists sit gridlocked on their daily commute.

The average driver is delayed by 27 minutes or more at least once a month, while more than one in ten of those who

drive to work report they are at least 40 minutes late every time they are stuck in traffic.

Fifteen per cent of drivers have shifted their working hours to avoid congestion.

The chaos costs the economy at least £752million a year.

inbrief



THE XC90 has become a bit of a phenomenon for Volvo and their first SUV is still going strong as it enters its tenth year.

This is the first official sketch of the replacement for the current model, which has racked up 45,713 sales in the UK and 570,000 worldwide. It's due on sale at the end of 2014.

TIPS TO AVOID THE PERILS OF SNOW

THE first snowfall caused chaos in parts of the UK but the Institute of Advanced Motorists could help.

Their tips include ensuring windows are clear and to plan your journey to avoid minor roads.

In snow, start gently and avoid high revs. If you get into a skid, take your foot

off the pedals and steer – only brake if you can't steer out of trouble. And pack a blanket, hot drink and warm clothes.

A Unipart survey revealed just 12 per cent of drivers have given their cars a winter once-over, while 53 per cent don't know what tread depth their tyres should have for safe motoring.



IT'S official – major Chinese brand Geely will start selling cars in the UK next year.

The firm have signed London Black Cab makers Manganese Bronze Holdings as their UK distributors.

The first model, on sale at the end of 2012, will be saloon and hatchback versions of the Geely Emgrand, above.

Prices from £10,000 will be competitive. More models will quickly follow.

HONDA HAVE FRESH DESIGNS ON BRITAIN

HONDA are looking to strengthen their UK links by building a new advanced design studio here.

They already have their main European manufacturing and engine-making plant at Swindon.

The site of the studio, which could employ up to 40 designers, has not yet been decided, but London is a strong possibility.

Honda closed their previous European design centre in Germany in 2009.

Meanwhile, a new partnership between Toyota and BMW will see Toyota models in the UK, such as the Auris and Avensis, using BMW's latest 1.6 and 2litre diesel engines.

BMW will gain access to Toyota's expertise in hybrid engine technology.

That's all



SEAT

UNLIKE the mighty Barcelona FC, Seat have found it impossible to escape the effects of the Spanish economic crisis.

New car sales in Spain – Seat's home market – have crashed from 1.6million a year to 800,000 and are still falling. And Seat sales have gone from a high of around 500,000 in the 1980s to 339,500 last year.

But Seat are showing a fighting spirit that Lionel Messi would be proud of and are staging a remarkable comeback, despite Spain's and Europe's ongoing crisis.

This year global sales will rise for the second year running regardless of the slump, thanks to improvements in key markets such as the UK, where sales have already beaten last year's full total by more than 3,000.

And after I was given an exclusive sneak preview of their new models on the way, I can see there is finally reason for real confidence.

I was shown the next-generation Seats by the firm's head of product development, Matthias Rabe, who believes they are the vehicles to help the firm turn the corner.

What I saw made me think of Seat as being an Audi for the masses, with their sporty styling.

The new models include a striking Leon hatchback and, for the first time, a sleek and sporty estate version which will offer Spanish style with the engines and technology from VW adding German precision.

Expect to see the first plug-in hybrid Leons in around 2015. I tested two prototypes and they felt remarkably advanced and offered a nice mix of sportiness to go with their green economy credentials.

There is also a return for the Toledo badge on an impressive all-new five-door compact saloon which will sit between the Ibiza supermini and the Leon but will be priced closer to the Ibiza.

It is a model that could have perfect timing as buyers look to downsize without sacrificing creature comforts and style. The Toledo gets many facial styling cues of the IBL Concept, right.

I also expect to see Seat deliver their first SUV model within the next two years, along with an all-new Exeo executive car, above right, which has recently been facelifted.

But the first and key new model will be the Mii – pronounced Me – Seat's new city car which is based on the Up!



road test

SEAT Mii

SEAT hope their future about Mii.

Their new city car goes perfectly with a

The little Mii, above like a Spanish holiday fortune for you to enjoy.

The Seat designers' job giving the Mii its new set of headlights is a little car that's big.

I also like the cool smart metallic grey, surprisingly upmarket the cabin makes it fun in the motoring version.

The interior has a adults, defying its compact and on the road it's a degree of fun as it Skoda Citigo and identical 1litre engine.

Having spent a day the Mii on a sunny day puts a smile on your face for a price of £7,500 if you buy it.

Together with Seat the Mii could be the start of Seat's fortunes.

