

AUTOMOTIVE

Bentley, Rolls-Royce welcome bees back to production line

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At 300,000, Bentley's Flying Bees are back at work after a period of hibernation. Image courtesy of Bentley Motors

By LUXURY DAILY NEWS SERVICE

To bee or not to bee: that is not the question at British automakers Rolls-Royce Motor Cars and Bentley Motors, both avid apiculturists and supporters of UN-declared World Bee Day on May 20.

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Both brands, while deviating slightly from their auto business, acknowledge a simple truth: bees pollinate almost 90 percent of the world's wild-flowering plant species and more than 75 percent of food crops globally. And both carmakers boast impressive apiaries at their manufacturing plants in England.

"Bentley's Flying Bees have become a firm fixture in Crewe and as we come back stronger as a business, now is the time for our bees to return and bring a little extra help with them," said Peter Bosch, member of the board for manufacturing at Bentley, in a statement.

"This is all part of a wider sustainability program at Bentley as a significant contributor to local biodiversity and adds to our ambition to lead sustainable luxury mobility in the future," he said.



Bees at home in Rolls-Royce's Goodwood, England plant grounds. Image courtesy of Rolls-Royce Motor Cars

Notwithstanding their vital role in supporting food security and biodiversity, bees are threatened worldwide from

intensive and mono-cultural farming practices, land-use change and habitat loss, pesticides and rising temperatures linked to climate change.

While rivals, when it comes to bees, both **Bentley** and **Rolls-Royce Motor Cars** seem on the same page. They see a threat to a key player in biodiversity, and are working to do something about it.



A Bentley beekeeper. Image courtesy of Bentley Motors

Flying Bees

Take Bentley's efforts.

After spending the winter months in hibernation with local beekeepers, Buckley's Bees Ltd., the 120,000 Bentley Bees returned home May 20 and will be joined by an additional 180,000 British *Apis Mellifera* honeybees. This, as Bentley proudly points out, is the largest collection of bees in the U.K. auto industry.

The number of national beehives will increase from two to five, all located on the edge of Bentley's headquarters in Crewe. The area is filled with bee-friendly wild flowers and borders the Cheshire countryside, offering an ideal habitat for them.

The bees will go straight to work, with high expectations of matching the productivity of Bentley's colleagues, as the company puts it.

Each hive has the ability to create 15kg of honey. In all, nearly 200 jars of honey can be produced and shared with Bentley's colleagues and visitors.



Flying Bees at work in one of the Bentley beehives. Image courtesy of Bentley Motors

After a COVID-19 lockdown hiatus, Bentley this week commenced production on the Continental GT and Flying Spur lines, following the return last week of Bentleyga and Mulsanne production.

Bentley said its "Come Back Stronger" program includes the introduction of 250 comprehensive and wide-ranging hygiene and social distancing guidelines implemented to enable a safe return not all of which extend to the 300,000 bees.

The Carbon Trust last year recognized the Volkswagen-owned automaker's Crewe headquarters for achieving

carbon neutral status. Measures that helped included use of renewable electricity through on-site solar panels, purchases of certified green electricity and 100 percent green gas.

Bentley also planted 100 native British trees on its site, "making the busy bees feel at home, as they ramp up their honey production line," as the automaker puts it.



Honey produced from beehives on its grounds is offered to guests of Rolls-Royce Motor Cars as well as visiting customers commissioning bespoke models at its Ateliersuite. Image courtesy of Rolls-Royce Motor Cars

Rolls-Royce of Honey

Rolls-Royce Motor Cars is no slacker in the bee department, either.

The BMW-owned brand in 2017 created an apiary at Goodwood plant in West Sussex. The apiary houses nearly 250,000 English Honey Bees, which reside in six traditional English-crafted wooden beehives.

As well as foraging on the 42-acre Rolls-Royce site, with its half-million trees, shrubs and wildflowers, together with eight acres of sedum plants growing on the factory's "living roof," the bees roam over the surrounding 12,000-acre Goodwood Estate at the heart of the South Downs National Park and home to the Duke of Richmond and Gordon, the company said.



The beehives at its Goodwood plant in England are named for the five models of Rolls-Royce cars and the sixth for the Spirit of Ecstasy hood ornament mascot. Image courtesy of Rolls-Royce Motor Cars

Each year, "The Rolls-Royce of Honey" is handprocessed by local specialists and served to guests of the brand, including customers commissioning their vehicles in the company's Atelier suite.

"The apiary is a project dear to the hearts of everyone at Rolls-Royce," said Richard Carter, director of global communications at Rolls-Royce Motor Cars, in a statement.

"World Bee Day is a reminder that as well as helping to conserve the U.K.'s bee population and benefiting our local farmers, growers and wildlife, we're part of something much bigger and of fundamental importance," he said.