

## Rolls-Royce car sales hit new record

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Rolls-Royce Motor Cars has reported a 31% rise in sales during 2011 to 3,538 cars.

The growth rate was weaker than that seen last year, when sales rose 150%.

The year's sales nevertheless marked a fresh record for the BMW luxury marque.

Rolls-Royce's £165,000 Ghost model, which is smaller and less ostentatious than the £235,000 Phantom models, has been the main driving force behind the company's sales growth.

"We had an outstanding year in 2011 and we should take a moment to reflect on this Great British success story," said chief executive Torsten Muller-Otvos.

Rolls-Royce's strong performance last year was more than matched by rival ultra-luxury car company Bentley, which sold 7,003 cars during 2011, marking a 37% rise that returned it to pre-recession levels.

Further expansion

Rolls-Royce said last year's sales were the highest in the marque's 107-year history, beating the previous record set in 1978 when 3,347 Rolls-Royce models were sold.

At the time, the Bentley and Rolls-Royce marques were both parts of the same company.

The two brands went separate ways a decade ago, when the German automotive giant Volkswagen Group took over the Crewe factory in Cheshire, where Bentleys are still being

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produced.

BMW acquired the right to use the Rolls-Royce brand and built a brand new factory on the edge of the Earl of March's Goodwood estate in West Sussex where it started manufacturing new models.

That factory has been expanded in line with a broadening of the model line-up, which currently includes four Phantom models and one Ghost model.

The expansion is set to continue as the product range is developed further, Mr Muller-Otvos said.

Industry insiders predict that a convertible Ghost could hit the road in a couple of years.

### Global markets

The market for Rolls-Royce models grew particularly fast in Germany and Russia, where sales more than doubled last year.

Sales in the Asia Pacific region rose 47%. In the UK they were up 30%, while in the Middle East they rose 23%.

The US and Chinese markets are the most important ones for the company, though it has not released detailed figures about how many cars it sold in individual markets.

Looking ahead, the carmaker will further develop its global network of dealerships, and will enter new markets in South America, Mr Muller-Otvos said.

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