Vauxhall Launches Onstar In The UK

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- Vauxhall to bring OnStar to UK this summer
- Wi-Fi hotspot for up to seven devices
- Emergency response notification if airbags deploy
- Stolen vehicle recovery technology to assist Police
- Free trial period: no charge for OnStar and Wi-Fi for 12 months
- 24/7 European headquarters based in Luton, Beds
- Significant investment, creating 120 new jobs

Luton – Vauxhall is bringing OnStar to the UK this summer with a comprehensive package, which includes a high-speed 4G LTE mobile network, emergency response notification and stolen vehicle recovery technology.

The system will be free for customers for the first year, and will be available in selected models in Vauxhall's passenger car range from August. Debuting at the 2015 Frankfurt Motor Show in September, the first all-new Vauxhall to get OnStar will be the Brit-built Astra which arrives in UK showrooms in October.

Based in Luton, Bedfordshire, OnStar's European headquarters is set to open for business 24/7 this summer thanks to a significant investment in bringing the project to Europe.

Globally, OnStar is the leading provider of connected safety and security solutions, value-added mobility services and advanced information technology in the automobile industry. It connects around seven million customers in the United States, Canada, China and Mexico with features including 4G LTE connection, emergency services and smartphone remote control.

As well as the UK, OnStar will be available in 13 other markets across Europe, including Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland.

"With OnStar, Vauxhall is bringing the latest connectivity technology to a wider audience," said Tim Tozer, Vauxhall's Chairman and Managing Director. "OnStar will make driving safer as well as offering new innovations in infotainment and telematics. And best of all, the system will be free to customers for the first year of ownership.

"We are also very pleased to bring the European headquarters to Luton, creating 120 new jobs, joining our head office, Vivaro van plant and UK distribution centre which are already based in the local area," Tozer added.

Wi-Fi hotspot for up to seven devices

With OnStar, each Vauxhall becomes a powerful, mobile Wi-Fi hotspot giving access to apps and services that require a high-speed mobile or data connection. Up to seven mobile devices can be connected simultaneously. Passengers will be able to stay in touch with family and friends via social media, play games, stream movies or watch TV via their favourite app or work while away from the office.

Emergency response and roadside assistance

If an airbag deploys, OnStar will be alerted automatically and an advisor will then contact the vehicle to determine whether help is required. If there is no response, emergency services are immediately sent to the vehicle.

Available 24/7 and 365 days a year, OnStar Advisors are located at the OnStar service centre in Luton. At a push of an SOS button, OnStar users can request assistance whenever they deem it necessary, for example, if they witness an accident. The OnStar buttons will be located in the overhead centre console or the rear-view mirror on some cars.

The new system also includes roadside assistance services making being stranded with a flat tyre or an empty fuel tank a thing of the past. A call to the OnStar team will ensure that users will receive help as quickly as possible.

Remote connection with OnStar smartphone app

Smartphone users will be able to connect to their vehicle remotely with the OnStar smartphone app enabling them to:

- Contact OnStar from anywhere
- Call up important vehicle data such as oil life or tyre pressure
- Remotely lock or unlock the car
- Locate the car online
- Honk the horn and flash the lights
- Quickly download destinations to the in-car navigation system
- Easily manage the vehicle's built-in Wi-Fi hotspot settings

Rapid vehicle recovery

OnStar will be able to assist vehicle owners and police if a vehicle with the system is stolen. The stolen vehicle assistance will enable OnStar to work closely with law enforcement agencies to ensure that the car is recovered quickly and safely and returned to its rightful owner. Remote ignition block will allow OnStar to send a remote signal to the vehicle that blocks the engine from starting once it has been reported stolen.

Up-to-date with monthly diagnostics

OnStar can also provide subscribers with a monthly vehicle diagnostics email with the most important vehicle data and information. A diagnostics check can be requested at any time at the push of a button, providing peace of mind before setting off on a longer journey.

European customers in complete control

Subscribers will be in complete control of their data and the services they receive. Before the services are activated they will have to agree to the terms and conditions. They will be able to choose whether they want to reveal their current location – at a push of the Privacy Button their position will be hidden. However, no matter whether the location is hidden/unhidden, OnStar will not be used to monitor its user but will solely offer services. In case of an airbag deployment, OnStar will by default override the mask functionality so that emergency services can be dispatched to the exact location as quickly as possible. In this special case saving lives is priority.

OnStar European Headquarters in Luton, UK

Based in Luton, Bedfordshire, Vauxhall/Opel's OnStar headquarters is set to open for business 24/7 this summer thanks to a significant investment in bringing the project to Europe.

The European hub takes its inspiration from the original OnStar HQ at General Motors' global base at the Renaissance Center in Detroit. OnStar has been established in the United States for 19 years where it provided the blueprint for operations in Canada, China, Mexico and now Europe. Advisors handle over five million calls per month from seven million customers.

OnStar joins Vauxhall's existing operations in the Luton area including its headquarters, a manufacturing plant, which builds Vivaro vans for supply across Europe and the UK parts distribution centre.

Luton is one of the most ethnically diverse towns in the UK, which helped in the sourcing of the multilingual staff required to answer calls from customers across Europe. The eight languages spoken by advisors are:

- English
- German
- French
- Italian
- Spanish
- Portuguese
- Dutch
- Polish

New recruits are subject to a rigorous native speaker fluency test which ensures they meet the standards required by OnStar.

Another reason Luton was chosen as OnStar's European hub was that Vauxhall's Customer Care centre has been based in the town, so there was already a high level of expertise in the area.

The OnStar headquarters employs 120 people, most of whom are new hires, and is split into three divisions: Contact Centre, Command Centre and administration and support. The Contact Centre will be fully operational from August. OnStar will be available on selected models sold in the following markets:

- Austria
- Belgium
- France
- Germany
- Ireland
- Italy
- Luxemburg
- Netherlands
- Poland
- Portugal
- Spain
- Switzerland
- UK

"We're looking forward to receiving our first customer calls in the Luton Contact Centre," said Brian McCreavy, OnStar's Region Manager, Europe. "During ramp-up, between August and year end, we expect to take around 90,000 calls before growing to 400,000 calls next year."

Once it is completed, the NASA-style Command Centre will feature big screens rolling 24/7, 365 days a year. Dots on a huge map of Europe show the location of vehicles whose drivers have pressed their OnStar buttons.

"The Command Centre is the nerve centre of our business," said McCreavy. "It assesses external forces, both natural such as snow and man-made like traffic jams, that may affect our customers and the response we provide them with."

Each driver's infotainment system, which is registered in the owner's home country, is identified by nationality when a call comes through to OnStar, ensuring that the operator who takes the call is fluent in the driver's chosen language. This language will also follow the driver should they travel across Europe.

In an accident situation, OnStar can recognise where the car is damaged (front, side or rear of the vehicle), even if the occupants are unconscious. Police and ambulance are then immediately deployed. OnStar has Europe-wide relationship with all emergency services, meaning that calls made are dealt with quickly and efficiently with no introduction required.

"OnStar is a staple of people's motoring lives in North America, China and Mexico and is now taken for granted by those who own GM products," said Jon Hyde, Director, Global Expansion at General Motors. "In total, seven million GM customers benefit from OnStar currently, so we're confident that this technology will become invaluable for buyers of Vauxhall products."

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