

CLASSIC DRIVER

The Return of the Mini Rally Car



It should of course be 'MINI' as it's the BMW-owned company which will be footing the bill, but, industrial protocol aside, the great news is that a 4wd MINI Countryman WRC will be contesting a limited number of international events next year, prior to a full season in 2012.

The production-based five-door will be powered by a 1.6-litre, four-cylinder turbocharged engine from **BMW Motorsport**, and has been under development by the **Banbury** company since early 2009. It will compete under the new **Super2000** regulations, put in place by the **FIA** for 1600cc, 4wd machinery with engineering clearly relevant to road cars and much-reduced levels of cost.

The exploits of the then-**Abingdon**-based team in the 1960s with **Hopkirk**, **Aaltonen** and **Mäkinen** in red/white **Mini Coopers** on the **Monte Carlo Rally** helped create the **Mini** legend. While the **BMW MINI** has been raced and rallied since its launch, this is the biggest competition effort by **MINI** yet, with the car ideal for the new regulations.

Prodrive Chairman, David Richards, commenting on the **Countryman WRC** said: "This is a very exciting new motorsport programme. During the 1960s, [the] **Mini** captured the imagination of the world when the tiny car took on the might of V8-powered **Fords** and won what was then one of the toughest motorsport events, the **4000km Monte Carlo Rally** .

"I believe our new **MINI** will become a firm favourite of the latest generation of rally fans, just as it is adored by its millions of owners across the world. We already have a significant number of confirmed customer orders for the new **MINI** rally car with the first deliveries scheduled for the start of the 2011 season."

Text: Steve Wakefield

Photo: Prodrive

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