

How UK kit car manufacturers can register cars in Europe

It's stating the obvious to say that registering British kit cars in mainland Europe is not easy. We'd go further and say that very few UK kit car makers even attempt to export to our neighbouring European countries because the regulatory hurdles – even for cars that comply with our IVA – are too high. But it's not impossible and Gunther Schleyer and Mark Hendrikx of CCK Kempton have been working with some UK kit car makers to open up the continental market. We met them during the Autosport International show to find out how it's done.

Gunther has registered over 250 British kit cars in Germany – he bought his first Caterham 40 years ago (and built a Dutton before that), becoming a Caterham dealer and, more recently, an outlet for Westfield. So he knows how the system works. However, the process of registering a kit car in Germany became a lot more complicated at the beginning of 2016 when German authorities realised that a number of cheap Chinese 'copycat' cars were being registered after getting into the EU via the UK's IVA system. Today, an IVA'd car won't be given a German registration.

The main criterion cars have to meet is emissions regulations. Cars registered before the end of 1992 are easy to register as they predate Euro 1 regulations. Anything registered after that date needs to comply with the emissions limits that were in place for mainstream cars at the time of registration – and it's the date of first



Gunther of CCK Kempton with Simon and Mark of SCS-Delta

registration that counts here, not any age-related registration that may relate to a donor car. So if you have a Pinto engine kit car that was first on the road in 1995, it's not going to get a German registration.

Any newly built kit car must now comply with the latest Euro 6 emissions regulations to be registered in Germany. This makes it almost completely cost-prohibitive for a German enthusiast to register a kit car, but a manufacturer who plans to export a run of cars could meet the regulations at a cost that could be passed on to customers. And CCK Kempton has already got the Ford Zetec engine approved to Euro 6

regulations – something Gunther was told by many people would be impossible. At the time of writing, he is very close to getting the Ford Ecoboost 2.0 and 2.3 approved at Euro 6 levels.

It was through a mutual friend that Gunther met Mark. Mark is a fellow kit car enthusiast, but one who happens to work on OEM engine calibration for his dayjob. When the two met, the Zetec engine Westfield had already failed the Euro 6 emissions test three times. It passed first time after Mark took on the project. The project relied on UK suppliers who were willing to deal in low volumes, so the ECU comes

from MBE and the catalyst is built to Mark's specification by Cats & Pipes.

While CCK's package for the Zetec was approved on a Westfield, the paperwork from those tests can be used on any other make of kit car provided it meets certain criteria – for instance, the weight, gear ratios and other figures need to be within nine per cent of the Westfield's figures. The work CCK has already done makes the German market more attractive to makers of other similar cars. The same will be true for Ecoboost powered cars when CCK has that package approved, something it's very close to with the help of another UK supplier – SCS-Delta, which is



CCK Kempton has plenty of experience registering kit cars in Germany,

supplying the ECUs. With Specialist Control Systems (SCS) they found a perfect partner. On the one hand, they provide the necessary hardware and on the other hand they are able to implement changes to the ECU very quickly thanks to their know-how and experience. Without the help of SCS and Mark's guidelines, the realisation of CCK's Euro 6 goals would be impossible or, at the very least, unaffordable.

As well as emissions, there are other considerations before a British kit car is approved by the TÜV for use on German roads. It is necessary to prove electromagnetic compatibility, which is measured using a complex process in a measuring cell. A drive-by noise test is also necessary, – set at a very low 75dB. A static noise figure is also recorded, but that's just as a reference for roadside spot-testing should the police believe you've made your car noisier than it should be. For other aspects of the car's design, such as

projections and construction and use, an IVA certificate is mostly accepted. As with IVA approval, for instance, all windows, seatbelts and lights must be E-marked.

So how much would it cost for a British manufacturer to use CCK's services to get a car approved? That depends on how many test fails there are and how much development is required, depending on the used engine, catalyst and so on. But in the case of Ford Zetec and Ecoboost powered cars, much of the hard work is already done. CCK is next working on a Lister Bell with a Lotus Evora sourced Toyota V6 engine, and the Chevrolet LS engine is a likely candidate too.

For individuals, the process is usually too expensive. However, if a manufacturer sells five to 10 vehicles within two years, the costs can be recovered. For example, Caterham charges a higher price for EU vehicles yet exports around 50 per cent of its production.

One thing is for certain: Gunther and Mark believe there is a ready market for British kit cars in Germany. "German petrolheads see British kit cars and think they can't register them here," says Gunther, "but it is not impossible." Mark adds: "Every sports car meet in Germany is a line of Porsches with maybe a BMW. People want something different."

And the market needn't be restricted to Germany. Just as Germany accepts some of our IVA standards, many other European countries accept Germany's emissions standards – so once a kit car has German number plates, it becomes much easier to register it in other EU countries. Gunther and Mark are passionate about what they do, too. When you speak to them, you realise that helping people achieve their dream of registering a kit car is more important than making money. Says Gunther: "I don't have a job, I have a hobby that I work on full

time. We are petrolheads who want to help people pass." CCK has already been able to help a number of British companies and has long since become well known in the scene.

Of course, the Brexit question is one that can't be avoided, but Gunther believes that German enthusiasts' willingness to spend extra money on German approval will extend to paying import tariffs that may be introduced next year. A question remains whether those IVA standards outside of emissions and noise will continue to be accepted, but it seems that right now the European market is one that's ready to be exploited by British kit car makers.

The CCK team is looking forward to answering all enquiries from private individuals or manufacturers and will be happy to make you an offer. The company can also help with older used cars before 1992, which can be registered in Germany with considerably less effort.

W: www.cck-kempton.de

BUYER BEWARE: IS THE SECOND-HAND KIT CAR YOU WANT TO BUY CORRECTLY REGISTERED?

We have become increasingly aware of an issue of unscrupulous kit car owners avoiding the IVA test and illegally registering cars before selling them on to unsuspecting second-hand buyers.

The scam works like this: they will buy a cheap, older kit car and transfer its identity on to a newly built car. Duttons are particularly susceptible to this because values for old cars in need of restoration are often lower than the value of the Ford donor parts they contain. Those parts can be sold on for a profit, the chassis and body scrapped and the identity/

logbook transferred illegally to a different car.

The resulting cars are 'ringers' and often easily identified by those with a little kit car knowledge: if you're looking at a modern Seven style roadster, for example, but it's described as a different make and model on the logbook.

Duttons are not alone in being targeted, but it has become such a prolific problem for such models that the Dutton Owners' Club has become proactive in calling out to the authorities cars that are carrying wrong identities from Dutton models. Other older kit car models are also at risk of such activities.

The risk in buying such a vehicle is that it has not been through the IVA test, is incorrectly registered and cannot legally be driven on the road.

To avoid being caught out, you should always research the model you're buying to ensure the car you're looking to buy matches its description on the V5C document. If in doubt, walk away as a car registered in this way cannot be driven on the road until it has passed an IVA test and been registered correctly, which impacts heavily on its value.