

Carmaker Rolls-Royce backs UK after record year (Update)

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Iconic luxury automaker Rolls-Royce said it remained committed to Britain come what may from Brexit

Rolls-Royce Motor Cars "belongs to Britain," its chief executive said Thursday amid growing concerns over the possible impact of a no-deal

Brexit on the economy.

German-owned Rolls-Royce sold a record-high number of luxury vehicles last year, with purchases soaring worldwide, it announced.

"2018 was a most successful, record-breaking year for Rolls-Royce," said its chief executive Torsten Mueller-Oetvoes.

"We have seen growth in all our regions around the world... We set a formidable mark in 2018: I am confident it will prove the spur to even greater success in 2019."

Mueller-Oetvoes warned that should Britain depart the EU without a deal in place, "probably the mood here in the UK tanks and probably also our sales might be affected".

But he insisted that Rolls-Royce, owned by German top-range maker BMW since 1998, would not transfer production abroad.

Such action is "complete no-go for me", he said.

"Rolls-Royce belongs to Britain. We are committed to Britain. Rolls-Royce is part of what I would call the British industrial crown jewels.

"It is an in-built brand promise even for our customers worldwide to be proudly built in Goodwood" in southern England.

Speaking to the German business weekly Wirtschaftswoche, Mueller-Oetvoes said Rolls-Royce had decided to bring forward its annual production break and close the Goodwood factory for two weeks from March 30, one day after the UK is due to leave the EU.

On a disorderly Brexit, he added: "We have more than 600 suppliers

around the world... If only a fraction of the roughly 32,000 components that arrive every day were missing, production would come to a halt in our Goodwood factory."

The company has stockpiled components ahead of Brexit.

"We have already developed alternative logistics solutions, including turning away from road transport. If in doubt we will fly in components," Mueller-Oetvoes said.

The prestigious brand whose models include the Ghost and Phantom, sold 4,107 cars across more than 50 countries in 2018, the highest annual figure in Rolls-Royce's 115-year history, it said Thursday.

Sales jumped more than 22 percent compared with 2017, when 3,362 Rolls-Royces were bought.

The UK-made vehicles were most popular in the Americas, Rolls said in a statement, adding that its workforce surpassed 2,000 for the first time.

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