



PRESS RELEASE

Westlake Tyres announces an exclusivity deal with Axle Group for the UK passenger tyre market

- Westlake Tyres provided the event's winning cup, flown in from the UAE
- The event took place at The Oxfordshire Golf Club
- Automotive charity BEN was also present raised some funds at the event

London, 26 September, 2011.– Westlake Tyres, manufactured by ZC Rubber –the world's 10th largest tyre maker and China's biggest producer of rubber products– announced at the recent Westlake NTDA Golf Day, that it had appointed Axle Group Holdings Limited – which owns both the retailer National Tyres and Autocare and wholesale Viking International, as sole distributor of its passenger tyre range in the UK. The Axle Group is an extremely successful and growing company, which is one of the reasons why Eskay Tyres became interested in working with them. Its wholesale division, Viking International, has significantly increased stocks and same day delivery capability, while the retail division, National Tyres and Autocare, has recently added 20 new branches to the network this year, now totalling 240 sites.

Mr. Peter Harries, Group Executive Director for Axle, said that among the many reasons the Group was interested in Westlake Tyres was the knowledge that Westlake “is a top quality product, available in an extensive range of sizes and manufactured by a company which has made significant investments in World-leading tyre manufacturing equipment”.

Jorge Crespo, European general manager of Eskay Tyres –part of the Al Dobowi Group– said that Eskay decided to partner with the Axle Group “due to the comprehensive exposure to the different sales channels, their extensive national coverage within the UK,





and their disciplined brand positioning strategy”.

Crespo also stated that among the advantages Viking International had over other distributors, and part of the main reason for his interest in the organisation, was “their outlets, in terms of quality and quantity, their desire to expand, their thoughtful marketing strategy and the personable approach and experience required to nurture brands”, something which both Eskay and Westlake are keen to enhance. Mr. Harries further stated that: “we also recognize Eskay’s marketing expertise and we look forward to working with them to develop Westlake sales in the UK”.

Mr. Harries also said that the Axle Group didn't underestimate the importance of working with Eskay, especially because “they provide a link into the factory which ensures, in turn, product quality, range development, production capacity and high fill rates. Westlake also add value in the way that they manage and market their brands in other European markets”.

When asked about the Axle Group’s interest in reaching a deal with Eskay, Mr. Harries mentioned that the Group has an excellent portfolio of exclusive European-produced brands and that, given the continued growth of their wholesale and retail businesses, the demand for these brands continues to increase. Thus, “Westlake will enable Axle to sustain this growth and to continue to deliver industry-leading choice and availability”. He further stated that Axle Group had been searching for the right brand for some time, “and in Westlake we believe we have found the ideal brand”.

When asked about the Westlake exclusivity deal for the UK, Mr. Harries explained that, with it, “there is responsibility”. “Retailers must be confident in the quality of the product that they are offering to their customers, and they want to be confident in the continuity of the price and the availability of that product. In Westlake we can offer a top quality product to these retailers, which we will stock in depth to ensure industry leading fill rates”.





Mr. Harries also talked about how the importance of the UK market for a tyre manufacturer such as Westlake will benefit Viking International's customers, and said that "Westlake represents an excellent value proposition for the consumer. It is a competitively priced quality tyre that retailers can fit with confidence to their customers' vehicles. They are available in a wide range of sizes, so with our extensive stocks and same day or next day deliveries, we can top up retailers stocks very quickly. We intend to market the Westlake brand through both our retail and wholesale operations".

Finally, Mr. Crespo stated that: "Westlake is one of the top ten manufacturers in the World, and as such, their expectations are to partner with equally first class companies that are able to grow at the pace the factory is introducing new product ranges, and developing outstanding products. Direct exposure to the end user via a well managed and controlled distribution is of paramount importance in the new commercial strategy, and Viking International will be a critical partner in that area".

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