

VOLKSWAGEN BEETLE 1.6 TDI DESIGN

By Jim Mc Cauley

It was the shape of things to come when the original was launched in 1938 and so it remained as the sole Volkswagen model for many years. Today, the iconic resonance of the past is one of the many bodystyles built around the company's benchmark Golf hatchback. Reappearing in 1998, the 2011 incarnation is longer, wider and lower, distancing itself to a certain degree from the femininity of the late 20th Century model.



As with any Volkswagen line, there is an appealing choice of engines and transmissions with the test model powered by the company's 1.6 TDI diesel engine linked to a 5-speed manual transmission. This 105 PS unit takes the car from rest to 62 mph in 11.5 seconds with the potential to reach 112 mph. Based around supporting Golf architecture, handling is sharp and confident, while a totally redesigned and repositioned cabin layout leaves the driver in a more forward and commanding position. Precise steering and smooth power delivery

increase the appeal of the car which offers roomy 4-seater practicality and flexible luggage arrangements. Hatchback access to a boot half as large again as the 1998 model at 310 litres improves luggage storage which can be further extended by the split folding rear seats. In the test car, the boot mounted sub-woofer of the optional Fender sound system took up some room but offered the audiophile a 400W output. This system is complemented by ambient lighting choices around the door mounted speakers.

Maintaining the retro feel, dash trim is finished in body colour with a shallow upper glove compartment echoing that of the original car. However, continuing the body colour onto the steering wheel spokes seems overkill and distracts from the visual width and retro intent of the dash panel.

On the economy and environmental fronts, this 1.6 TDI engine has a quoted combined fuel consumption of 65.7 mpg and with a CO2 emissions of 113 gms/km is in Band C for annual car tax. A gear-shift prompt on the instrument panel helps to aim for optimum fuel economy.

Finished in 'Design' trim, the equipment list includes a comprehensive electronic handling



package ensuring the neutral response of the car, while a full quota of airbags offers secondary protection. Among the comfort and convenience features are the stop / start function, semi-automatic air conditioning, Bluetooth connectivity, reach and rake steering column adjustment and height adjustable front seats. Optional extras on the car included the Fender sound system at £520, front and rear parking sensors at £340 and touchscreen navigation system at £1,305.

The model, as tested, is listed at £19,720 before options and is covered by Volkswagen's 3 year / 60,000 mile warranty with one year European roadside assistance. The car is positioned in Group 12E of the ABI's (1-50) insurance categories.