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# Press Information

## EVO CHALLENGE GETS SET FOR NINTH CONSECUTIVE SEASON

- 2009 Mitsubishi Ralliart Evolution Challenge Round 1
- Rallye Sunseeker – 27th & 28th February
- Ten crews line up for traditional Bournemouth start
- Series welcomes an international field



27th February 2009

The first round of the 2009 Mitsubishi Ralliart Evolution Challenge kicks off today with its now traditional season-opener at the Bournemouth-based Rallye Sunseeker.

Once again, the official series for homologated Group N Lancer Evolutions has attracted a high-quality entry and, in true Evolution Challenge fashion, it is going to be difficult to predict a winner.

This year sees ten crews line up for the start which, in comparison with other years, is a reduction in entries – a factor in no doubt due to the current economic climate. However, for 2009 there's a twist to the proceedings, with over half the drivers coming from overseas.

First off the line is last year's runner up Nik Elsmore, who will be starting his sixth full season with the series and is one of the favourites to take the title. Right behind him is young Irish charger Daniel Barry, who has the pace to win events and will now also be looking for consistency in his newly built Evo IX.

Third in line is series newcomer Simon Hughes, who is another driver to watch, but admits he is still getting used to his Mitsubishi in his first full-season of four-wheel-drive. He is followed by another quick young Irishman Owen Murphy, who proved his pace on asphalt last year by being a front-runner in the Irish Evo Challenge and now turns his attentions to gravel.

The next two entries are from Sweden: Andreas Magnusson, who won the 2008 Swedish Evo Challenge and was awarded a free entry to the Rallye Sunseeker and Hans-Erik Weng. Having finished just behind Magnusson in his home series, Weng was also keen to experience UK rallying for the first time and is looking forward to debuting his Evo X – the first time Mitsubishi's new Lancer will be seen in competition in Britain.

Having contested the UK Evo Challenge in 2007 and then being a leading light in the Irish version in 2008, Ulsterman Alan Carmichael returns to the British series for 2009, determined to put his experience and recent top form to good use.

Another Evo Challenge returnee is the charismatic Icelandic Rally Champion Daniel Sigurdarson, who has vowed to show just what he is capable of this weekend. He is followed by a driver who has travelled even further to be part of the Evolution Challenge, Neil Armstrong from Barbados.

Challenge regular Jonathan Sparks sets off on his fourth consecutive season in the Mitsubishi Championship and hopes that his knowledge of the events and experience in the series will stand him in good stead this season.

The Rally Sunseeker gets underway at 7.00 pm tonight, when the 80-car field tackles the two spectacular night-time stages from the centre of Bournemouth, through the botanical gardens and along the sea front road.

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Saturday sees a further 11 timed special stages, all of which take place on gravel roads in the forests around Ringwood, Verwood and Wareham. The event finishes back in Bournemouth town centre at 6.00pm.

The 2009 Mitsubishi Ralliart Evolution Challenge is supported by Mitsubishi Motors UK, Ralliart, Pirelli tyres, Sunoco fuels, JR Motorsports, Speedline Corse wheels, Carbone Lorraine brakes, Walkinshaw Performance, Sparco racewear and PIAA lights - who sponsor the junior award for under 25-year old drivers.

#### **Mitsubishi Ralliart Evolution Challenge entries (in start number order)**

- 9 Nik Elsmore (Coleford)/ Craig Drew (Bream)
- 10 Daniel Barry (Enniskerry)/Martin Brady (Navan)
- 12 Simon Hughes (Abergle) /Patrick Walsh (Aberystwyth)
- 17 Owen Murphy (Cork)/Dai Roberts (Carmarthen)
- 21 Andreas Magnusson (Skeppshult, Sweden)/Henrik Hulterskog (Stensjön, Sweden)
- 22 Hans-Erik Weng (Säfte, Sweden)/Roger Gunnarsson (Sweden)
- 24 Alan Carmichael(Ballymena)/Ivor Lamont (Ballymena)
- 33 Daniel Sigurdarson (Iceland)/Isak Gudjonsson (Iceland)
- 35 Neil Armstrong (Barbados)/Max Ferri (Barbados)
- 36 Johnathan Sparks (Glastonbury)/Chris Davies (Abergavenny)

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For media enquiries and copyright free images please contact the Mitsubishi Ralliart Evolution Challenge  
Coordinator & Press Officer Simon Slade:  
Tel: 01935 424873 | Mob: 07966 153555 | E.mail: [simon@rpmprmo.com](mailto:simon@rpmprmo.com)

For all other enquiries please contact:  
General Manager - Mitsubishi Ralliart: Paul Brigden  
Tel: 01285 647680 | E.mail: [p.brigden@mitsubishi-cars.co.uk](mailto:p.brigden@mitsubishi-cars.co.uk)

Mitsubishi Motors UK Press Office:  
General Manager - Press and Public Affairs: Andy Wertheim  
Tel: 01285 647200 | E.mail: [a.wertheim@mitsubishi-cars.co.uk](mailto:a.wertheim@mitsubishi-cars.co.uk)

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