

Last Scots car firm driven south

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SCOTLAND'S last vestige of car production, the company which makes the Haldane, a replica of classic Austin Healey's, has been bought by an English engineer. He now plans to build the evocative roadsters at a plant near Brighton.

Haldane Developments Limited has been annexed by Mr Den Tanner, a 36-year-old engineering director, for an undisclosed five-figure sum, following the company's liquidation in July, when the six-year-old project ran into cash-flow problems.

Ms Lorna Murray, spokeswoman for the Glasgow liquidator, Kidsons Impey, said Mr Tanner's Pilgrim Cars offer was accepted after a promising Scottish consortium failed to generate sufficient funds. She added: "We are disappointed that we could not arrive at an agreement which would keep the Haldane project at East Kilbride or within Scotland."

At the eleventh or twelfth hour, the Scottish group's offer was not accompanied by the requisite funds. Pilgrim Cars was our second, but final choice. Mr Tanner, whose company already produces replica's of the AC Cobra and a convertible which carries strong influences from the MG TF and Morgan, said: "If only I could have found a way of keeping it in Scotland I would have, but running businesses by remote control is not my style."

He said there was an "outside and long-term chance" that Scotland might feature in a larger-scale production operation for the Haldane, which will retain its original name and format at the Henfield site. Mr Tanner plans to build Haldanes, in HD100 and HD300 versions, as complete cars or offer them in kit form. He believes the classic Austin Healey lines, combined with practical modern components, will appeal to export buyers, particularly in Japan and Germany.