

like a bigger capacity diesel engine. So I'd want a big brawny diesel of at least 3 litres.² I don't see any need for a petrol engine. Diesel suits a Defender-style vehicle better, thanks to its extra torque.

There also needs to be an automatic version, as well as a manual.³ Once upon a time, automatics weren't good off-road but that's not true anymore. Nowadays, having an automatic is usually a boon in the rough. It's easier to feather the throttle and it makes for smoother progress, big advantages on the loose stuff. In addition, the new Defender will have to be sold worldwide, including the US, where an auto version is essential.

We must also look at the Defender's current off-road limitations and improve on them. As it turns out, the Defender remains an awesome off-roader, but in some areas it is actually the least capable Land Rover. Its water-wading depth, for instance, is the worst in the Land Rover range.⁴ We need to put that right on a new model. Height-adjustable suspension – always a boon off-road – would increase its water-wading depth. I think air springs should be available, but not standard – the same as with the Discovery 3.

I don't think a new Defender needs to have an aluminium body. Some sort of new GRP material – light and flexible – would be ideal. Otherwise steel is an excellent body material. It is easier to press and to repair than aluminium.

If we want to encourage users in our original markets, such as Africa, the vehicle needs to be mechanically simple. We almost need two versions of the powertrain: a more sophisticated version for Western markets where there are full diagnostic service facilities and a more technically basic version where servicing may have to be done under the shade of a palm tree.

It hurts me to see that Land Rover is no longer the leader with aid agencies, though we're still important here. The Japanese have partly taken that market from us. I feel a simple, tough vehicle is exactly what these agencies need, so hopefully we can have a powertrain that works both for the developing world and the developed world. The Defender had two different powertrains for a while, a simple Brazilian-built 300Tdi for emerging markets and a more technically sophisticated European-built Td5.

Most of all, the Defender needs to remain the brand icon. Its predecessor began it all 60 years ago, and any successor must continue to be the benchmark for off-road utility vehicles for many years to come.

RIGHT: Defenders now and then. The Defender remains the most awesome vehicle in the world off-road, partly because of its manoeuvrability and its toughness

² The current Defender has a 2.4-litre engine.

³ Today's Defender is manual only.

⁴ 500mm – by comparison, the Freelander has a water-wading depth of 600mm.