



The first part of the conversion involves fitting NGK Iridium BKR6EIX spark plugs in place of the VXR's standard NGK PFR6T10G items



All told, these are enough changes for GM to designate the motor with the Z20LEH code and given the impressive internal specification it clearly offers plenty of tuning potential. Exactly how much we were about to find out, as waiting for us in Courtenay's workshop was a mint 3000 mile old Astra VXR earmarked for a Stage Two conversion. This package utilises a VXR branded 70mm Remus stainless steel exhaust system (including turbo down pipe and high flow sports cat,) plus a bespoke ECU remap using software that's exclusive to Courtenay Sport. In combination these parts should let the Astra breathe more freely, while the remap will raise the boost levels, as well as modifying fuel and ignition parameters to suit.

Courtenay Sport's Mark Watts reckons that a gain of around 40bhp and 30lb ft is realistic when running on Super Unleaded fuel, which would be an impressive gain. That's particularly so considering that in standard trim (aside from a K&N panel filter), running on

Tesco 99 octane juice the VXR cranked out a mighty 243.6bhp at 5639rpm, allied to 257.3lb ft at 2914rpm. That's marginally up on the stock power figure and considerably higher than the factory-quoted 236lb ft torque claim.

"They can be a bit up on torque figures," reckons Courtenay's Mark Watts, "because Vauxhall does seem to

FITTING THE COURTENAY SPORT ASTRA VXR STAGE TWO CONVERSION

The first part of Courtenay's work entails binning the standard NGK PFR6T10G spark plugs in favour of NGK Iridium BKR6EIX items, which have a superior heat rating and better thermal properties. This involves unbolting and

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be a bit conservative and some of them seem very good and slightly up on standard, particularly when running on high octane fuel."

But, as with all tuning, it was the post conversion torque and power difference we were interested in, so without further ado, Courtenay's Mark Ratcliffe started wielding the spanners and we'd see just how much bolt on potential the Astra VXR has.

removing the VXR's intake pipe, plugging the turbo inlet with a plastic bung to prevent the ingestion of debris, then loosening and removing the spark plug rail. That done, the old plugs are unscrewed and the new NGKs carefully tightened home.

The next step moves onto the exhaust system, starting with the turbo down pipe. Despite being a mint, dry-use-only 3000 miler, penetrating oil is sprayed



Turbo down pipe has to be replaced as part of the upgrade; penetrating oil is sprayed on (far left) as the retaining bolts for the down pipe have been known to shear off