



LowCVP's Andy Eastlake Maintaining ULEV momentum

Overall car sales in March 2016 set new records for the UK market, and a new record was also set for plug-ins – of which 7,144 were registered in the month – up 16.8 per cent on the same month of 2015 (which itself had set a new record). For the first three months of 2016 over 10,000 plug-in cars were registered, representing 1.4 per cent of the new car market.

But, as *GreenFleet* readers will no doubt be aware, revisions to the ULEV grants for plug-in vehicles took effect at the end of February, so we may need a few more months' data to determine whether or not the changes have slowed down the rate of uptake of electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles.

The challenge for all of us is to maintain this low carbon momentum while we transition to a fully sustainable market. Convincing drivers to make the switch is about removing the barriers one by one.

There's no doubt the ULEVs of today can service almost any travel need, but showing how they actually improve the driver's experience is key to encouraging new drivers to make the switch. The convenience of recharging overnight at home must be complemented by a universal and simple public charging network.

Local policies to enhance the EV driver's access, such as discounted and preferential parking or use of bus lanes, must be based on common categories to avoid confusion. Most important of all, the government's policies to support ULEVs need to be as consistent as possible, avoiding surprises and providing the longest horizon of certainty possible.

There's been an encouraging start to 2016 in the UK and international developments have also provided a boost for the plug-in sector. Pre-orders of the Tesla Model 3 reached an astonishing 325,000 in the first week, destined for delivery in 2017. This will surely help to justify expectations of scale and efficiency economies in battery production – which Tesla has also backed with its 'gigafactory' in Nevada – and help to bring EV purchase costs down to parity with conventional vehicles, as recent studies by Bloomberg and others have predicted.

The LowCVP is working in all these areas to build on the initial ULEV success: to identify the challenges of widespread EV recharging demand; to develop the consumer information tools that can show the vehicles' benefits; and to create policies at local and national level that will sustain the momentum towards a greener UK fleet.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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