



Andy Eastlake Government warms up the electric market

The weather may not showing many signs of spring coming soon, but there are certainly more 'green shoots' in the electric vehicle market following developments in the last month.

Fleet operators considering introducing EVs or plug-in hybrids (PHEVs) must be encouraged, in particular, by the Government's announcement of £37m to continue to develop the recharging network. The funding gives an opportunity for local authorities across the whole of England to install rapid charging points to facilitate longer journeys as well as developing these on the strategic road network. Train operators are also incentivised to install charge points at railway stations to encourage modal interchange and there is continued support, too, for business for home and workplace recharging points.

The Scottish Government also announced support for free installation of home recharging points for electric vehicles throughout Scotland as well as the provision of public charging outlets every 50 miles on trunk roads. This would seem like a good time to take advantage of the Energy Saving Trust's offer – one of the LowCVP's partner organisations – to provide free consultancy to a hundred businesses to help establish whether they could benefit from switching to EVs or PHEVs. The announcement is the latest phase of the EST's Plugged-in Fleets Initiative (PIFI), backed by £280,000 of Government funding. There's already a report – well worth a read – 'Plugged-In Fleets Initiative: Charging Forward' available for free on the EST's website.

With representatives of the car industry and consumer groups we've developed a design of the new car fuel economy label for electric and plug-in cars, introducing colour-coded elements (as already exist for conventional vehicles) which – since February 11 – have been appearing in car showrooms.

The new label design shows the range a vehicle can travel on battery power as well as CO₂ and fuel consumption figures for the test cycle as well as an estimated annual fuel cost for all the energy used.

Don't forget, too, that for public sector fleet managers not yet on the road to EV adoption, there are only a few weeks to go to take advantage of the Department for Transport's £3,400 subsidy towards a new Ashwoods Hybrid Transit light commercial vehicle; funding is available under the DfT's Low Carbon Vehicle Procurement Programme (LCVPP).

FURTHER INFORMATION
www.lowcvp.org.uk

Andy Eastlake is managing director of the Low Carbon Vehicle Partnership (LowCVP)

FINANCE

Budget 'unlikely' to affect company car numbers says Alphabet chief exec

According to Alphabet chief executive Richard Schooling, the up and coming budget is unlikely to diminish the popularity of company cars.

Schooling stated: "The move from making 1 per cent to 2 per cent increases in the annual rate of company car BIK from 2015 sounds significant but, for a higher rate taxpayer driving a £22,000, 130g/km CO₂ diesel, it will only add £1.50 a week to their BIK bill. Moreover, because the majority of company cars are diesels, most drivers will see their tax bill go down in April 2016 when the Government belatedly scraps the 3 per cent diesel surcharge. Given

that taxation is crucial to fleet policy planning, this Budget is also a welcome return to predictability, with car BIK now laid out for the next four years."

Schooling continued: "The reduction in the CO₂ thresholds for capital allowances, lease rental disallowances and the 100% first year allowance for low-CO₂ cars were not unexpected. They will undoubtedly lead to further falls in average fleet emissions after 2013, with cost and tax benefits for both fleet operators and drivers."



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EVs

Football club signs eleven new electric vehicles

Players from the football club Forest Green Rovers will be able to commute in an all-electric Nissan LEAF, as part of a trial to lower the team's carbon emissions. Forest Green chairman Dale Vince said: "Travel is one of the biggest environmental impacts in football, with teams and fans across the country covering millions of miles every season by car and coach." Rovers' green revolution has already captured the imagination of the football world – The New Lawn stadium is powered with 100% renewable energy from solar panels and wind power, red meat has been cut from the menu for players and fans, while matches are played on an organic pitch trimmed by a solar-powered robot lawnmower – the 'Mowbot'. Vince said that their next step was to introduce zero emissions electric vehicles, and the club has teamed up with Nissan who are supplying 11 LEAF models for a new trial. The club intends to use renewable energy powered charging points at the club, and with most of the players using the LEAFs an emissions cut of 61% is expected.

Coupled with a new carpooling scheme, the club expects the cuts in carbon to rise to 83%. Forest Green manager David Hockaday took delivery of his Nissan LEAF four weeks earlier, and has become acutely aware of how uneconomical his normal diesel car is. "I do thousands of miles throughout the season, going to training and games, but also travelling to other matches scouting opposition teams and players. Not only are there no carbon emissions but it also costs about 10 times less to re-fuel using electricity rather than diesel." Travelling on any of those journeys over 100 miles will be aided by the rapid charging points being installed at motorway service stations all over Britain as part of the Electric Highway, after Nissan joined forces with Forest Green's main backer: green energy company Ecotricity. Forest Green's stadium, The New Lawn, has an EV rapid-charger, which is powered completely by renewable energy from Ecotricity's windmills, and able to re-charge a Nissan LEAF to 80% in less than 30 minutes.

