

News Release

Can the UK drive low carbon cars to the masses?

Leading automotive manufacturers meet to discuss future of green cars

09 April 2009

Some of the world's leading car giants will assemble in **London from 20-21 May** to discuss the next steps forward for the automotive industry to develop green car technologies – making eco-cars a viable alternative for the consumer whilst helping to reduce a large proportion of the 157 million tonnes of CO₂ produced by the UK transport sector.

Hot on the political agenda, the Prime Minister Gordon Brown has now promised to reveal a 'green' route to economic recovery in this month's budget, with measures including trials of electric cars and a roadside network of vehicle-charging points. This pledge follows Business Secretary Peter Mandelson's offer of £1.3bn in loans from the European Investment Bank to support the ailing car industry in developing new technology for a greener industry.

Many see low carbon vehicle technologies as the only viable route for the UK transport sector to achieve its part of the Government's 80% reduction in emissions by 2050, as road transportation accounts for nearly 70% of all CO₂ emissions from passenger transport. Car makers Nissan, Jaguar Land Rover and BMW are among the key players tackling this challenge at **Low Carbon Vehicles 2009**, an event at the Institution of Mechanical Engineers (IMEchE), 1 Birdcage Walk, London – which will also be attended by Lord Drayson, Science Minister.

Recent trends demonstrate that the public prefer cost-effective cars to those that have an environmental impact. Alongside industry experts including the Technology Strategy Board, a public body advising the Government on green issues, these top car manufacturers will debate the controversial issue of achieving wide consumer demand for low carbon cars and how new technology can help overcome that challenge.

Speaking ahead of the event, Professor Richard Folkson, Chairman of IMechE's Automobile Division, said: "We have identified low carbon vehicles as a priority in terms of helping to combat climate change. Companies now have the opportunity to tell an audience about new technologies that can reduce vehicle emissions and contribute to the UK's target to cut harmful gases by 20 per cent. The event aims to enlighten people about new technology out there and demonstrate the options available. There is so much to do technically and there is definitely a role for Government-funded research projects into the problem."

As well as debating how to attract buyers, the event will also cover whether electric cars really are 'green', the advantages of hybrid designs and the need for a UK vehicle structure to recharge car batteries.

Professor Folkson continued: "The challenge facing electric cars is the matter of charging them to power again. If owners are forced to spend 40 minutes or longer recharging their cars, the environmental novelty with soon wear thin. We must create a structure that enables cars to get back on the road no longer than it takes to fill up with petrol – if this can be achieved then the appeal of electric cars is sure to be increased."

Encouraging people to choose greener alternatives is at the heart of the Institution's work with its members. The Institution's Formula Student event, Europe's largest flagship motorsport event organised by the IMechE, launched its Class 1A category in 2007 to encourage students to design cars using alternative fuel, such as hydrogen and biofuels.

John Ling, IMechE's Head of Transport, was also enthusiastic about the future for low carbon cars: "The first next generation electric cars will hit the UK's streets this year and the potential for the low carbon vehicle market is huge – but only if we can get it right. A variety of cutting-edge technologies are needed to create cars that the average man on the street can afford. There is an exciting future ahead for engineers as we strive for the ultimate goal of zero carbon vehicles."

The event provides the ideal platform for the big car manufacturers to liaise with other key players in the automotive industry and demonstrate the work they have already achieved in the low carbon vehicle arena. Mike Richardson, Manager Advanced Hybrids Group for Jaguar Land Rover said: "The development of vehicles that meet the challenge of climate change is a business imperative for all vehicle manufacturers. The Low Carbon Vehicles event is the premier UK technical conference on practical methods for carbon emission reduction. I looking forward to presenting some of the work Jaguar and Land Rover have done in this area, including discussing the challenges involved in applying technology to improve the carbon emissions of premium luxury vehicles."

Both members and non-members can attend the event, which starts from 9am on 20 May.



Cap: Oxford Brookes University presents their hydrogen racing car (on the right) to be raced at Formula Student 2009.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

- If you would like further information please contact the IMechE Press Office on 0207 304 6992/6888 or email media@imeche.org. The lecture starts from 9am on 20 May. Media should contact the IMechE for any advance interviews/filming or to attend the event.
- The IMechE has released a Transport Policy Statement on Electric Vehicles. Please contact the IMechE Press Office for a copy.
- The Institution of Mechanical Engineers (IMechE) was established in 1847 and has some of the world's greatest engineers in its history books. It currently has around 80,000 members in 120 countries representing mechanical engineers involved in a diversity of fields such as the automotive, rail, aerospace, medical, power and construction industries to name a few. Visit www.imeche.org for more information.