

LowCVP's Andy Eastlake

Changing buyer perceptions of low carbon vehicles

London's first Formula E race – and the current series decider – is scheduled to take place in Battersea Park in late June (27-28), prompting questions in the low carbon community about how this demonstration of 'new energy' power and performance could impact on public attitudes towards electric and other low carbon vehicles.

Formula E is on a mission to use the glamour of motorsport to show how electric racing can radically change the way we think about what we drive, particularly in cities. The race is coming at a good time as there is clear evidence that the motoring public are already 'switching on' to electric vehicles. Sales, albeit from a low base, have been rising rapidly and the UK is now one of the biggest markets in the world for battery and plug-in hybrid models.

But there are many compelling reasons to consider vehicles running on other low carbon fuels, as well as electricity. Running costs are a major factor, of course, and with electricity at only a few pence per kWh (and the inherent efficiency of electric powertrains) this can be a substantial cost saving. But there is also fuel duty support for other fuels such as methane (natural gas) and LPG, and mandates for biofuels use, together with purchase grants for a wide range of ULEVs.

However there are many 'softer' or indirect reasons why low emission vehicles make sense from a user's perspective. LowCVP's recent work on local policy initiatives shows that preferential parking rates (free in many cases), the use of restricted lanes, access to low emission zones or exemption from congestion charging can be powerful incentives. As *GreenFleet* readers know there is a wide and growing range of low carbon and ULEVs now available on the market.

The LowCVP is supporting the Government in also looking at ways of changing perceptions in the HGV market, for example with the possible lifting of night time curfews for lower emission (and quieter) vehicles.

Public and buyer perceptions are clearly important, and this is not limited to vehicle owners and drivers. On a visit to Scotland last month I was told that passengers have been found to let the regular bus go by just so that they can ride the low emission model on their journey into town.

The reasons highlighted are the comfort, quietness and smoother ride, together with a personal sense of 'doing their bit', however small, to help the environment.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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