

Contents

UK Electric Vehicle Targets	1
Executive Summary	1
Policy Framework	1
Zero Emission Vehicle (ZEV) Mandate	1
Key Milestones	2
Sales Targets by Category	2
New Cars	2
Vans and Light Commercial Vehicles	2
Compliance and Penalties	2
Manufacturer Obligations	2
Enforcement Mechanisms	2
Infrastructure Development	2
Charging Network Expansion	2
Regional Distribution	3
Supporting Policies	3
Financial Incentives	3
Regulatory Framework	3
Industry Response	3
Manufacturing Investment	3
Supply Chain Development	3
Environmental Impact	3
Emissions Reduction	3
Air Quality Benefits	3
Challenges and Considerations	4
Infrastructure Gaps	4
Consumer Concerns	4
Supply Chain Constraints	4
International Context	4
European Alignment	4
Global Leadership	4
Future Outlook	4
Technology Development	4
Market Projections	5
Conclusion	5
References	5

UK Electric Vehicle Targets

Executive Summary

The United Kingdom has set ambitious targets for the transition to electric vehicles (EVs) as part of its commitment to achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. This document outlines the key targets, policies, and implementation strategies for EV adoption across the UK.

Policy Framework

Zero Emission Vehicle (ZEV) Mandate

The UK government has implemented the Zero Emission Vehicle (ZEV) mandate, which became law in 2024. This mandate establishes clear targets for manufacturers to transition their vehicle sales to zero-emission models.

Key Milestones

- **2024:** 22% of new car sales must be zero-emission vehicles
- **2028:** 52% of new car sales must be zero-emission vehicles
- **2030:** 80% of new car sales must be zero-emission vehicles
- **2035:** 100% of new cars and vans sold must be zero-emission vehicles

Sales Targets by Category

New Cars

The ZEV mandate requires that an increasing percentage of new car sales be zero-emission:

Year	ZEV Percentage	Notes
2024	22%	Initial mandate year
2025	28%	Progressive increase
2026	33%	Continued growth
2027	38%	Mid-term target
2028	52%	Accelerated phase
2030	80%	Pre-ban target
2035	100%	Complete transition

Vans and Light Commercial Vehicles

Light commercial vehicles follow a similar trajectory:

- **2024:** 10% of new van sales
- **2028:** 30% of new van sales
- **2030:** 70% of new van sales
- **2035:** 100% of new van sales

Compliance and Penalties

Manufacturer Obligations

Manufacturers who fail to meet the ZEV mandate targets face significant penalties:

- £15,000 fine per non-compliant vehicle sold
- Credits can be banked or traded between manufacturers
- Flexibility mechanisms allow for some year-to-year adjustment

Enforcement Mechanisms

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) monitors compliance through vehicle registration data. The Department for Transport (DfT) oversees the overall implementation of the mandate.

Infrastructure Development

Charging Network Expansion

To support the transition to EVs, the UK government has committed to expanding the public charging infrastructure:

- **Current Status (2024):** Approximately 50,000 public charging points
- **2030 Target:** 300,000 public charging points nationwide
- **Investment:** £1.6 billion public and private sector funding

Regional Distribution

Priority areas for charging infrastructure include:

1. Major motorway corridors (every 20 miles)
2. Urban centers and residential areas
3. Rural and remote communities
4. Workplace and retail locations

Supporting Policies

Financial Incentives

Plug-in Car Grant (Historical) - Provided up to £2,500 for eligible vehicles - Phased out for cars in 2022
- Still available for certain van categories

Benefit-in-Kind Tax - Zero-emission vehicles attract 2% BiK rate (2024/25) - Significant savings compared to conventional vehicles - Incentivizes company car drivers to choose EVs

Regulatory Framework

Road Tax (Vehicle Excise Duty) - EVs exempt from VED in first year - Standard rate applies from second year - Lower rates compared to high-emission vehicles

Industry Response

Manufacturing Investment

Major automotive manufacturers have announced significant investments in UK EV production:

- Nissan: £1 billion for Sunderland EV hub
- Jaguar Land Rover: All-electric by 2025
- Stellantis: £100 million for Ellesmere Port EV production
- BMW: MINI electric production in Oxford

Supply Chain Development

The UK is developing a comprehensive EV supply chain, including:

- Battery gigafactories
- Electric motor production
- Power electronics manufacturing
- Recycling and circular economy initiatives

Environmental Impact

Emissions Reduction

The transition to EVs is expected to deliver significant carbon emission reductions:

- **2030:** 2.6 million tonnes of CO₂ savings annually
- **2035:** 12 million tonnes of CO₂ savings annually
- **2050:** Contributes to net-zero target achievement

Air Quality Benefits

Reduction in local air pollution, particularly in urban areas:

- Decreased nitrogen oxides (NO_x)
- Reduced particulate matter (PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀)

- Improved public health outcomes

Challenges and Considerations

Infrastructure Gaps

Current challenges include:

1. Uneven geographic distribution of charging points
2. Grid capacity constraints in certain areas
3. Access to home charging for urban residents without driveways
4. Charging speed and availability on strategic routes

Consumer Concerns

Key barriers to EV adoption:

- **Range anxiety:** Concerns about vehicle range and charging availability
- **Purchase cost:** Higher upfront costs compared to petrol/diesel vehicles
- **Charging time:** Longer refueling times compared to conventional vehicles
- **Model availability:** Limited choice in certain vehicle segments

Supply Chain Constraints

Industry challenges include:

- Battery raw material sourcing and pricing
- Semiconductor availability
- Manufacturing capacity scaling
- Skills development and workforce transition

International Context

European Alignment

The UK's EV targets align with broader European efforts:

- **EU:** 100% zero-emission new car sales by 2035
- **Norway:** Leading global adoption (90%+ EV market share)
- **Netherlands:** 2030 zero-emission vehicle target
- **France:** 2040 end of petrol and diesel car sales

Global Leadership

The UK aims to be a leader in the global transition to electric mobility:

- Technology innovation and R&D investment
- Regulatory frameworks and standards development
- International cooperation on EV adoption
- Export opportunities for UK automotive sector

Future Outlook

Technology Development

Emerging technologies expected to support EV adoption:

- **Solid-state batteries:** Higher energy density and faster charging
- **Vehicle-to-grid (V2G):** Two-way energy flow for grid stability
- **Wireless charging:** Inductive charging technology

- **Battery swapping:** Alternative refueling model

Market Projections

Industry forecasts suggest:

- EVs reaching cost parity with petrol/diesel vehicles by 2026-2027
- Second-hand EV market growth supporting broader adoption
- Continued improvement in battery technology and vehicle range
- Integration with renewable energy systems

Conclusion

The UK's electric vehicle targets represent a comprehensive strategy to decarbonize road transport. Success depends on coordinated action across government, industry, and consumers, supported by robust infrastructure development and continued technological innovation.

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