University Engineers Take to the Roads in Electric Car Trial

Posted on Saturday 12th December 2009

Two University of Birmingham engineers will take part in a government supported UK-wide project to trial electric and ultra low emission vehicles, when 25 Mitsubishi i-MiEVs (Mitsubishi innovative Electric Vehicle) will be given to independent drivers, including motoring journalist Quentin Willson, to test over the next 12 months.

The project is run by the CABLED (Coventry and Birmingham Low Emission Vehicle Demonstrators) consortium, led by global engineering consultancy, Arup. This is the largest of eight regional teams to participate in the £25 million Technology Strategy Board's Ultra Low Carbon Vehicle Demonstrator competition as well as the first to begin vehicle trials.

Professor Kevin Kendall and Dr Waldemar Bujalski from the University of Birmingham's School of Chemical Engineering will both be handed the keys to their new Mitsubishi cars at the launch which takes place at Birmingham's Centenary Square on Saturday 12th December 09. Both are experts in energy, future fuels, and hydrogen fuel cells.

Professor Kevin Kendall said, 'The Mitsubishi vehicle is the best electric car I have ever driven and I look forward to commuting in such an efficient, economic and clean machine.'

Dr Waldemar Bujalski said, 'I'm very excited to participate in the low emission demonstration programme, the first of this kind in Europe. I believe that electric vehicles are the right starting point for achieving substantial reduction in carbon emission in short to medium term and the Mitsubishi iMiEV is a fine example of electric vehicle technology available today. I also strongly believe that in the long term a hybrid vehicle technology – a combination of electric drive and fuel cells using hydrogen on board as an energy carrier and a range extender - will prove to be the outright winner.'

The project will trial 110 vehicles on the roads of Birmingham and Coventry and, in total UK-wide, 340 vehicles are to be tested. The Mitsubishi i-MiEV is a fully electric car with zero emissions. It has top speed of 81mph, a range of 100 miles and can be trickle charged from flat to full in six hours at any UK three-pin socket, costing under £1 for a full charge. It can also be rapid charged from flat to 80 per cent in just 30 minutes.

Five other car manufacturers will roll out vehicles for testing by the consortium in 2010, including Jaguar/Land Rover, Mercedes Benz/Smart, Tata, LTI and Microcab Industries.

Iain Gray, Chief Executive of the Technology Strategy Board, said, 'We created the Low Carbon Vehicle Demonstrator competition to act as a catalyst for industry, the public sector and academia to collaborate to provide low emission vehicles and solutions to powering them. The journey towards low carbon transport will not be easy, but the demonstrator programme is the biggest project of its kind to date and is a major step in the right direction.'

Endorsing the programme as an i-MiEV driver in the trials, Quentin Willson, said, 'These first EVs that go on the Technology Strategy Board's demonstrator trial mark the start of a seismic shift in the sort of cars we drive and how we power them. The Mitsubishi i-MiEV is a forerunner of a transport revolution that eventually will change the world. At last here's an electric car that doesn't look like a church pew, seats four, does 80 mph and costs less than a quid to charge. What is there not to love?"

Neil Butcher, Arup's project leader of the CABLED consortium, said, 'Less than 1% of the vehicles registered every year in the UK are electric and most of these are currently used in London. We think that by 2020, low carbon cars will be commercially viable, and it's important that we start to understand the public's reaction and provide the necessary infrastructure to prepare for this.

'Today's launch is a landmark occasion for the UK automotive industry, and this project will begin to examine the points where the vehicles meet the built environment – energy generation, battery charging and driver behaviour. This is an important first step on our roads to a low-carbon future.'

Ends

Notes to Editors

Reporters, film crews and photographers are welcome to attend the Launch of the Electric Mitsubishi i-MiEV at Centenary Square in Birmingham this coming Saturday between 10am and 1pm. For further details, please contact Tom Rawlings or Hayley Longdin at Trimedia, 0121 265 2760 or email Tom.Rawlings@trimediauk.com / Hayley.Longdin@trimediauk.com

For enquiries relating to the University of Birmingham

Kate Chapple, Press Officer, University of Birmingham, tel 0121 414 2772 or 07789 921164.

About the CABLED consortium

The West Midlands consortium, called CABLED - short for Coventry and Birmingham Low Emission Demonstrators – is made up of 13 organisations, led by Arup, a company with experience that crosses all areas that touch this project, from vehicle design to planning to infrastructure and energy. The consortium will develop and demonstrate 110 road-worthy vehicles to be trialled in the two cities over 12 months. Part funding for the project has been approved from the regional development agency, Advantage West Midlands.

Each of the six vehicle manufacturers – Jaguar/Land Rover, Mitsubishi/Colt, Mercedes Benz/Smart, Tata Motors, LTI and Microcab Industries – are contributing their own vehicles towards the low carbon scheme, which includes a mix of fully electric vehicles, plug-in hybrids and hydrogen fuel cell cars.

Electricity providers E.ON are delivering charging points for the trial with assistance from the city councils of Birmingham and Coventry.

Three of the Midland's leading universities play a major role in the scheme with Coventry University undertaking the selection process of drivers, Aston University analysing vehicle usage data and the University of Birmingham contributing access and expertise gained from its hydrogen fuelling station, which is currently one of the very few of its kind in UK. A new hydrogen station is planned for Coventry University.

The Technology Board's Ultra Low Carbon Vehicle Demonstrator Competition

As part of the Low Carbon Vehicles Innovation Platform, £25 million has been allocated to eight highly innovative, industry-led collaborative research projects in the field of ultra low carbon vehicle development and demonstration. The competition, which culminated in June with the announcement of successful applicants, focused on encouraging the development of industry-led consortia that can deliver in bringing significant numbers of vehicles onto roads quickly. The competition winners will deliver over 340 new innovative cars on the road in eight locations around the UK in the next six to 18 months.

About the Technology Strategy Board's contribution

The government-backed Technology Strategy Board is working with business to speed up the development of low carbon vehicles, towards the point where they become a practical reality and UK business can benefit from the future commercial opportunities.

The winning projects have received a total of £25 million as part of an ongoing commitment to invest jointly with the industry to speed up the introduction of low carbon vehicles. This will support the investment already made by the consortia themselves and is the most significant step to date in the UK of a co-ordinated move towards low carbon transport.

To meet the UK's commitment to an 80% cut in carbon emissions by 2050, the carbon output of transport - currently a quarter of all UK emissions - has to be significantly reduced. The vehicles that we drive need to be part of the solution.

The journey towards low carbon transport will not be easy but the demonstrator programme is a major step in the right direction. With over 340 cars being trialled in several regions across the UK, and with the involvement of large and small manufacturers, RDAs, local authorities, universities and infrastructure companies, it is the biggest project of its kind to date.

About the Technology Strategy Board

The Technology Strategy Board is a business-led executive non departmental public body, established by government. Its role is to promote and support research into, and development and exploration of, technology and innovation for the benefit of UK business, in order to increase economic growth and improve the quality of life. It is sponsored by the Department for Business, innovation and Skills (BIS). For further information please visit www.innovateuk.org.

About Mitsubishi Motors' Environmental Credentials

Mitsubishi Motors has been developing electric vehicles since the early 1970s and selling them since the early 1990s. The i-MiEV has been developed solely by Mitsubishi Motors Corporation, and has been a sell-out success since going on sale in Japan in July this year, The 1,400 units allocated by Mitsubishi for the 2009 Japanese market have flown out the door and an impressive 900 orders have already been placed in Japan from the 2010 build allocation. European production will begin in October 2010 with left hand drive i-MiEV's available in markets across Continental Europe towards the end of the year.

Mitsubishi Motors is also investing heavily in carbon reduction programmes at every stage of its operations, including design, production, tailpipe emissions and end of life recycling as a part of its Environment Initiative Programme 2010.

More information on Mitsubishi Motors' environmental credentials can be found at www.mitsubushipress.co.uk and via pressoffice@mitsubishi-cars.co.uk.

University of Birmingham Fuel Cell Group

The Fuel Cell Group was set up in 2000 in the University of Birmingham's School of Chemical Engineering by Professor Kevin Kendall who jointly, with Dr Waldemar Bujalski and Dr Bruno Pollet, is leading the research projects into hydrogen vehicles and combined heat and power systems stemming from a range of Advantage West Midlands funding including Science City.