UTURE MOBILITY

Going with t current

The last few months have been busy in the electric vehicle world. Many more manufacturers are joining the EV club or upping their game, cities are launching low emission zones, countries are planning to ban petrol and diesel vehicles and there have been some significant announcements on improving charging technology and practicality.

Neil Barrett brings it all together...

WHEN IT comes to announcements about the global shift towards electric vehicles, you might have noticed a surge (sorry) in the weeks leading up to this magazine making its way through your letterbox.

The PR machines of vehicle manufacturers, charging point networks and others in the industry have gone into overdrive with some pretty significant announcements. Why now? Well, we've reached the point where several big countries have told us about their aspirations for banning sales of new fossil fuel vehicles.

66 Climate emergencies are being declared in many quarters...





We have low emission zones popping up all over Europe, including the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ), geographically matching the congestion charge zone in central London. Climate emergencies are being declared in many quarters and the debate has reached more in society than ever before. This critical mass of activity has been at least part of the catalyst for some big EV news.

In manufacturing, one of the biggest announcements has been the upcoming production of an all-electric Jaguar XJ here >>

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>> in the UK. Their Castle Bromwich plant will be churning out the modern replacement for the petrol and diesel versions of the XJ in the near future. It's clearly great news for manufacturing in the UK as well as for the many fans of the iconic marque in Britain.

While announcing the developments in the West Midlands, Dr Ralf Speth, chief executive of Jaguar Land Rover, acknowledged the challenge of consumer confidence in EV. "Convenience and affordability are the two key enablers to drive the uptake of electric vehicles to the levels that we all need," he told reporters. "Charging should be as easy as refuelling a conventional vehicle."

A positive direction of travel in that area has been outlined by the UK government in recent weeks. At the time of writing, a consultation is under way on mandating vehicle charging points in all new-build homes with dedicated parking spaces and there's a desire from authorities to see higher-powered, faster charge points including - crucially - pay as you go charging by credit or debit card. Convenience-wise, the latter could be a game-changer: simply tapping to pay rather than having to sign up for a charging network could be another tick in the positives column for someone waiting to make the leap.

Pop-up

Worthy of a mention here is the extra bit of news that Dundee and Plymouth may see pop-up charging points trialled in the coming year. For EV owners who don't have access to off-street parking, each of these 'hubs' have between three and six chargers and will literally pop up out of the pavement. They can be pushed back down when they're not needed. As the charging network heads towards a critical mass at some point soon, this sort of clever thinking around the location of the hardware is going to become more important.

It's not good news for everyone. Balanced against the news of investment in infrastructure

END OF THE ROAD FOR FOSSIL FUELS?

your country-bycountry guide to who's aiming to end new petrol and diesel vehicle sales...

Charging (an EV) should be as easy as refuelling a conventional vehicle.

is the removal of government subsidies for new plug-in hybrid vehicles, so those thinking of hedging their bets in terms of fuel sources will now need to go all in with 100 per cent electric if they want to pick up such a contribution.

Back to vehicle manufacturing and July was the month for a plethora of announcements from brands spanning perhaps the widest possible range of price-points and prestige.

Lotus revealed the world's first 'fully electric British hypercar' - the Evija - in London. There will be 130 of this model produced, starting in 2020, with an announced range of some 250 miles. Whilst not within the reach of the average motoring enthusiast, it's a significant illustration of the EV revolution truly transcending virtually the entire "luxury scale".

Combination

Another iconic British brand with something to bring to the EV table is MG, with an interesting focus on family-friendliness with their ZS EV model. MG have made a notable offer: for the first 1,000 retail customers, with a combination of government and MG-matched grants, they can pick up the car from £21,495 including installation of a home charging point. As well as MG shouting about the family-focused practicalities, it's quite a practical pitch to



motorists: rather than talking about an onthe-road price, grants, dealer/manufacturer contributions and home chargers separately, it's marketed as a bundle, with an extra bonus for those who jump in first. OK, it's not unique in the industry, but it helps keep things simple.

This summer also saw the announcement of a fully-electric Mini, set to go into production towards the end of 2019 with the cars possibly hitting the streets from March 2020. The Mini Electric's body shell will be evolved from the 3-door hatch model and will have no fewer than four distinct driving modes, with its 'GREEN+' option sacrificing some comfort to save more power and increase that all-important range.

Indeed, that's another important component to all of this. In the world of the electric vehicle, range is king, arguably. It's OK when time and charging point availability are on your side but when many of the world's drivers aren't particularly time-rich and there are still some geographic charging blackspots where you may still need to go quite out of your way to re-juice,

SIX 'LESS EXPENSIVE' ELECTRIC CARS

Renault Twizy: £6,690 Citroen C-zero: £17,020 Smart EQ Fortwo: £17,695 Renault ZOE: £17,720 (pictured below) Hyundai Ioniq: £27,250 Nissan Leaf: £27,995



LOW EMISSION ZONES IN PLACE **NOW OR COMING SOON**

Note: correct at time of research; many other towns and cities have implemented or are planning low emission zones Source: urbanaccessregulations.eu





From top: Jaguar's vision of an XJ replacement; the electric MINI due next Spring and the £2 million Lotus Evija

Good Motoring

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there are still some challenges to be overcome. Some in-depth testing from What Car? has seen real-world performance between 57 and 259 miles, from 18 EVs. Battery technology needs to improve further - development sometimes feels like it is incremental rather than littered with step changes - but, subject to budget, one of the biggest barriers to ownership has slowly but surely been coming down for many drivers.

All of these developments, when taken with the cultural shift towards greater environmental friendliness, will surely turbo-charge take-up of electric vehicles.

Finally, perhaps lost in all the excitement about brands, governments and stakeholders pushing the EV agenda forward, was the coming into force in July of the new EU rule meaning that all new four-wheel electric vehicles must make an artificial engine-like noise when travelling at under 12mph, including reversing. So, whatever happens in this brave new world, petrolheads can be sure that the internal combustion engine's legacy will live on. ■

