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The Prime Minister announced on Tuesday, February 4 the Government's intention to ban sales of new petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2035. Despite some mixed messages, the Department for Transport eventually confirmed that motorcycles are outside the scope of the initial consultation.



The 2035 deadline is five years sooner than the previous target of 2040 announced in 2018 and could be made even earlier if a faster transition is feasible. The ban also includes hybrid and plug-in hybrids for the first time, but all of the plans are still subject to consultation at this stage.

"There can be no greater responsibility than protecting our planet, and no mission that a global Britain is prouder to serve," said Prime Minister, Boris Johnson.

"2020 must be the year we turn the tide on global warming – it will be the year when we choose a cleaner, greener future for all."

Original guidance for motorcyclists was pretty woolly on the topic in 2018, stating: "The market for zero emission motorcycles is at an earlier stage than either cars or vans. Zero emission motorcycles can help reduce congestion, improve urban air quality and reduce noise.

"While cars outnumber motorcycles by more than 24 to one on UK roads, motorcycles are a sizeable vehicle population.

"To continue to support the development of the market and bridge the cost gap that remains between zero emission and petrol motorcycles, we will continue the plug-in motorcycle grant until at least 2020."

The Government still offers the plug-in motorcycle grant of 20% of the purchase price of certain electric motorbikes and scooters (up to a maximum of £1500), and the Ultra Low

Emissions Zone in central London that came into effect in 2019 included non Euro3 compliant motorbikes, too.

So, while cars and vans are very much in the crosshairs right now, it would be safe to assume that motorbikes will follow suit in the future, but not just yet.

Is this the end of the petrol-powered motorcycle?

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The government have announced plans that will see a ban on the sale of new diesel and petrol cars and vans in the UK by 2040 in a bid to tackle harmful nitrogen dioxide emissions in a move that will shake up the whole motor industry.

The move is expected as part of the government's clean air strategy – which is anticipated to favour the use of electric vehicles ahead of a High Court deadline.

The announcement will follow an order from the High Court that demanded that the UK cut harmful nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) emissions, which have been reportedly linked with as many as 40,000 premature deaths each year, according to the Royal College of Physicians.

What does this all mean for motorcycling?

Motorcycling as we all know is a cleaner and more efficient way of travelling and if more people were to use them instead of cars then congestion would be greatly reduced, also reducing emissions from vehicles that are stationary and sat in traffic, tackling the problem in two different areas.

A study in Belgium found that if just 10% of cars were replaced by motorcycles in our most congested cities then congestion would be reduced by a massive 40% and also cut up to 15,000 hours a day of vehicles being sat stationary in traffic.

It is unsure at the moment exactly what the proposals for motorcycles will be at the moment and how they will be included in the government outlines. There is however a strong argument for the use of motorcycles in the battle to tackle the high levels of NO₂ in our cities.

"With this announcement, the UK government is reinforcing the direction they've already taken by introducing the £1500 grant for two wheeled electric vehicles this year" said Umberto Uccelli, Managing Director Zero Motorcycles Europe. "This is, in our opinion, the way to go and in line with what other European governments have shown as well. Each time cars are mentioned we assume that this includes motorcycles as well, even though they have not been specifically mentioned by the British government thus far.

"With the progress we have made as the world leader in the electric motorcycle industry over the past 11 years, we're more than ready for what is coming in the next 23. At the same time we are convinced that by 2040 Zero Motorcycles will remain to be ahead of the competition, just like we are today."

The rise of electricity

With hybrid technology not yet available for motorcycles, it puts greater emphasis on the growth of electricity and how it could be used in future.

Electric motorcycles have, at the moment proved to be inadequate at providing enough range for most commuters to use every day and also faces the challenge of the time it takes between charges, making long-distance rides difficult.

Stevie Muir, Public Relations officer for the Motorcycle Industry Association said "The MCIA, in partnership with the National Police Chiefs Council and Highways England, has published its Motorcycle Safety and Transport Policy Framework, which puts forward the case for encouraging motorcycling as a sustainable transport option.

"As well as explaining the role of motorcycling as a solution to urban congestion, it states the case for the inclusion of motorcycling in mainstream transport policy and sets out a framework of practical recommendations as to how this might be achieved.

"Almost the entire motorcycle fleet in the UK is petrol. Many small motorcycles and scooters, the type popular with commuters, already meet ultra-low emission requirements. Powered two wheelers move through traffic quicker, help reduce congestion for all road users and take up less space to park."

The government is also trying to address some of this though, with an announcement the other day that outlined a heavy investment into electrical energy storage and making appliances more efficient. What this could mean is that some of this technology could transfer over to the batteries used in electrical vehicles, marking improvements that may see them able to be used as genuine alternatives to petrol vehicles.

The air pollution plan

The government published a draft air pollution plan in May, outlining its plans to cut the NO2 emissions with one of the expected proposals including a scrappage scheme. In the final report though, this was not included and described previous schemes as "poor value for money."

Alongside the ban on diesel and petrol vehicles, it's also expected that speed humps could be removed in a bid to reduce pollution from vehicles slowing down and speeding up. Local authorities will be able to implement these changes imminently, with a £40-million fund of a total £255-million pot and will also be able to use the money to implement new technologies, change road layouts and encourage the use of public transport. It could also see the implementation of emissions charging zones to help curb NO2 levels in the worst affected areas.

France is also looking to ban the sale of any car that uses petrol or diesel by 2040, with an overall aim to be completely carbon-neutral by 2050.