'Missed destination, heavy delays' - Fact checking SMMTs claims on EVs

Context

In March 2026, the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT) published its ***Same Destination, Smarter Route*** report on the UK's transition to zero-emission vehicles. While it acknowledges some progress, the report questions the strength and pace of the ZEV mandate introduced in 2024, and puts forward a series of arguments for weakening the UK's EV ambitions.

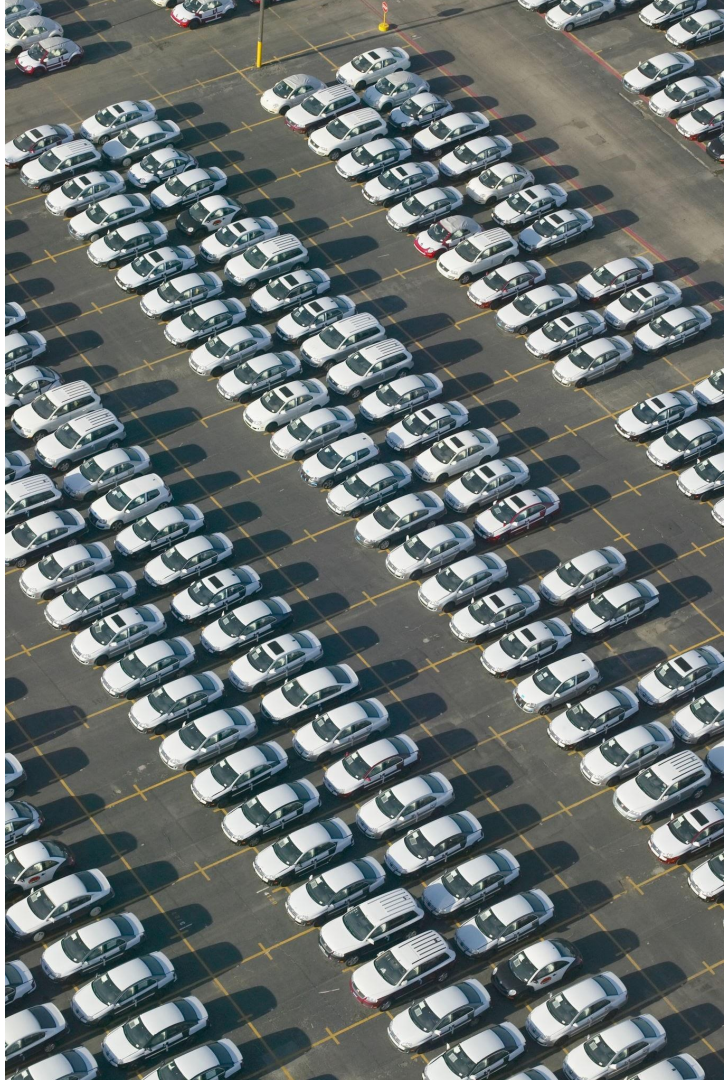
The report claims that *"The world of 2026 is not the one envisaged five years ago",* and argues that this justifies a slower trajectory for EV targets and greater flexibility for industry. A closer look shows that by many of the report's own metrics, the situation is actually better than anticipated. Much of the claims are based on **misread data, cherry-picking statistics, or presenting unsupported claims without evidence.**

In reality, the world today makes an even stronger case for ambitious electrification. Battery prices have fallen sharply, the need for energy security is clearer than ever, and drivers are directly feeling the cost of the UK's continuing dependence on volatile fossil fuels.

Given this, it is not right that the auto industry should be allowed to mark its own homework. **So T&E UK have fact checked it.**

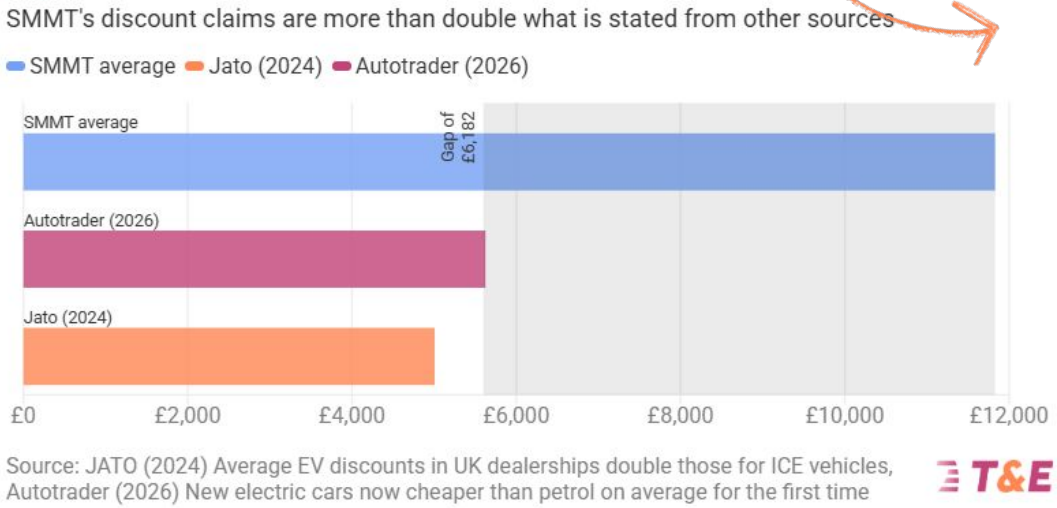
Section 1

Reviewing SMMT’s claims



Claim 1

SMMT *"[EV sales to date have only been possible due to] manufacturer subsidies to the tune of nearly £10 billion in the first two years of the ZEV Mandate" p.7*



Source: JATO (2024) Average EV discounts in UK dealerships double those for ICE vehicles, Autotrader (2026) New electric cars now cheaper than petrol on average for the first time

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Fact check: Inaccurate

845,346 battery electric vehicles were sold across 2024 and 2025. A £10 billion subsidy would equal an average discount of £11,829 per vehicle - more than double the **£5,006-£5,647 average discount identified by JATO and Autotrader** between 2024 and 2026. Without a clear methodology or source provided by SMMT, this figure appears significantly overstated.

Claim 2

SMMT

"[DfTs] original outlook suggested that a new car market without a mandate would reach 26% BEV share in 2025. Yet [...] drivers have proved less willing to move to electric vehicles than anticipated – with 2025's market share reaching 23.4%", p.3

Source: New Automotive, UK Electric Car Count

T&E

Fails to mention...

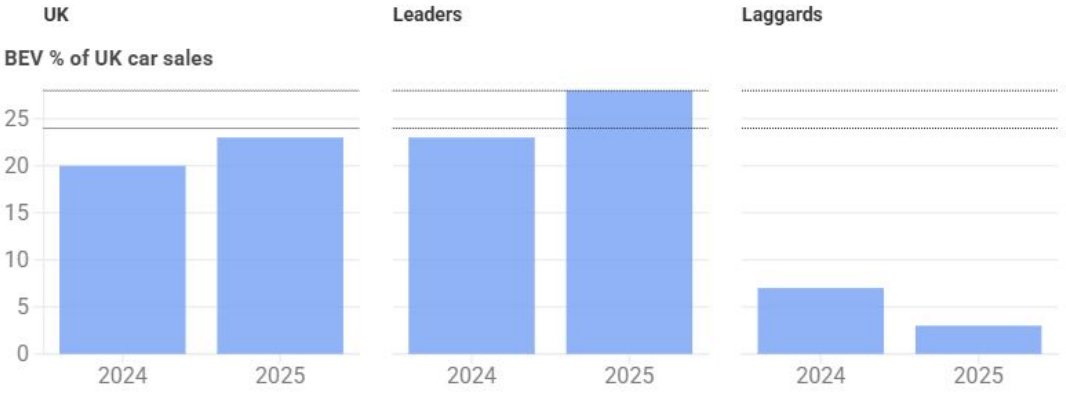
Demand for BEVs continues to grow strongly across the UK and Europe. In May 2026, UK BEV sales rose 31% year-on-year, making electric the fastest-growing car type. With rising petrol and diesel prices demand is only accelerating. On Autotrader, BEVs now attract more consumer enquiries than any other new car type.

Claim 2 continued

SMMT

"[DfTs] original outlook suggested that a new car market without a mandate would reach 26% BEV share in 2025. Yet [...] drivers have proved less willing to move to electric vehicles than anticipated – with 2025's market share reaching 23.4%", p.3

A small number of carmakers are bringing down the overall average - leading carmakers, representing 80% of annual sales, met the 2025 ZEV Mandate through BEVs alone



Source: T&E analysis of DataForce UK car sales data

T&E

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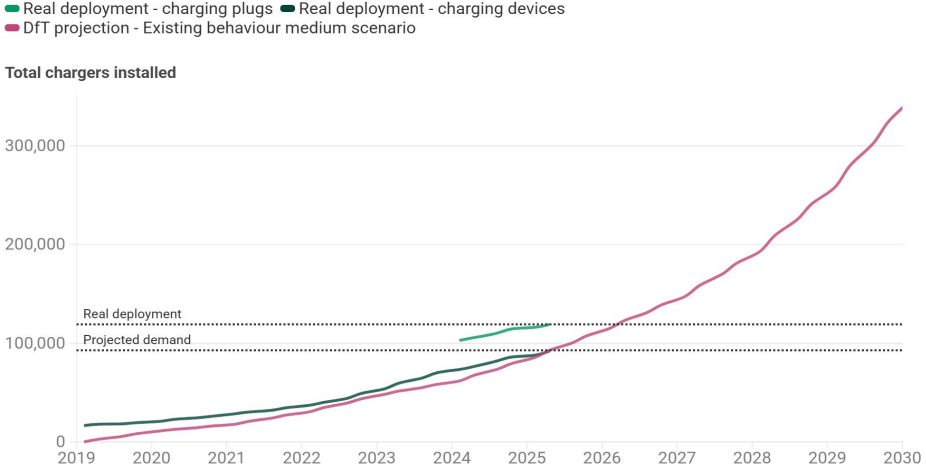
Fails to mention...

Progress across the auto industry has not been even. T&E analysis shows carmakers representing 80% of UK sales are already meeting the 28% 2025 BEV target. The shortfall is driven by a minority of manufacturers with limited or uncompetitive BEV offerings which are using PHEVs, HEVs and borrowing to comply. This is not evidence of weak consumer demand but poor business strategy by a minority of carmakers

Claim 3

SMMT *"public charging provision has increased, but rollout has not kept pace with BEV uptake. Chargepoint growth has slowed from 36.6% in 2021 to 19.7% in 2025 against a BEV uplift of 23.4%" p.5*

UK charging infrastructure has consistently been delivered ahead of demand



Source: DfT (2026), Electric vehicle public charging infrastructure statistics. HM Government (2022), Taking charge: the electric vehicle infrastructure strategy

T&E

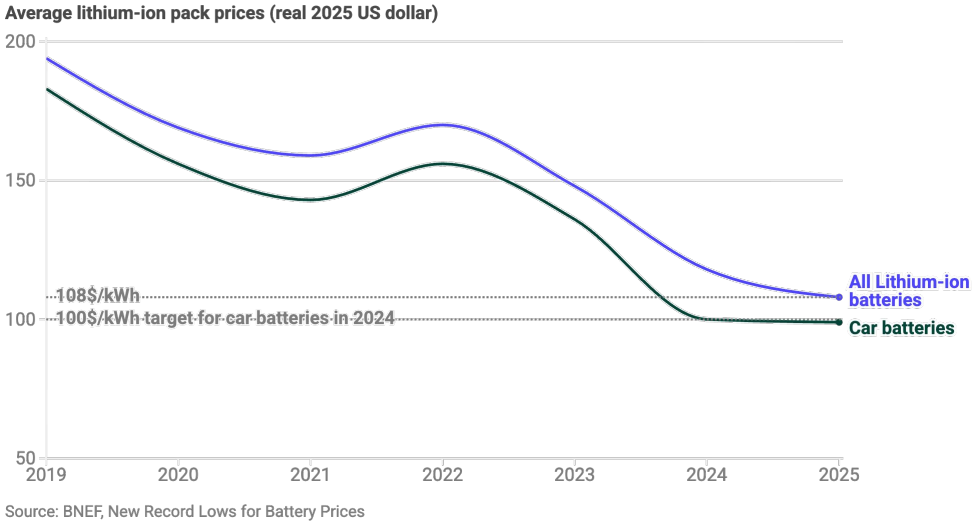
Fails to mention..

Chargepoint rollout has exceeded DfT's projection of need under an existing behaviour scenario every year since the projection was made. The number of public charging plugs now exceeds DfTs projection by 28% in April 2026.

Claim 4

SMMT

*"Battery costs have not decreased in line with expectation. In 2021, BloombergNEF estimated that EV batteries would cost less than $100/kWh by 2024 - potentially reaching as low as $80/ kWh in 2026. While battery prices have indeed reduced, as of the end of 2025, they were still on average **$108/kWh**" p.4*



Source: BNEF, New Record Lows for Battery Prices

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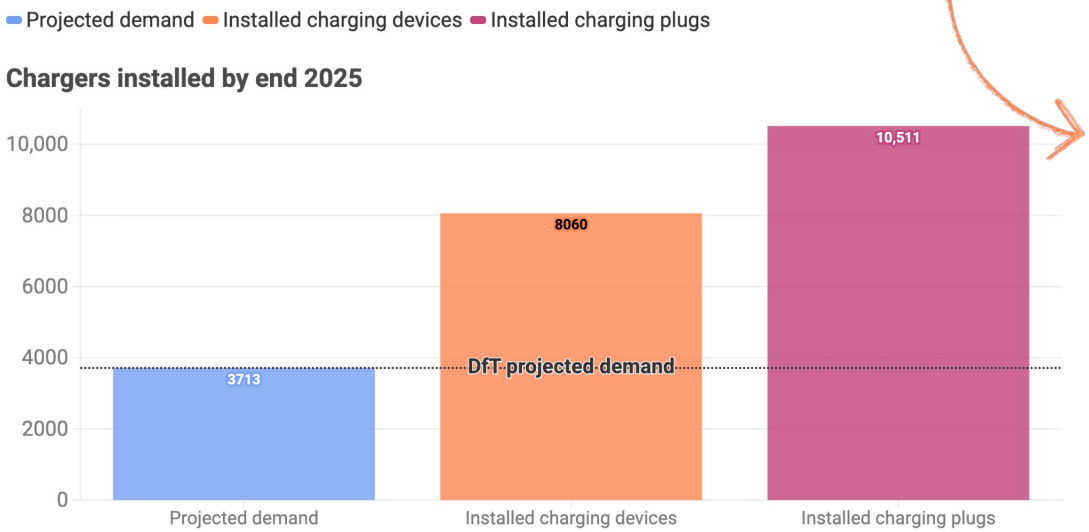
Fact check: Wrong

SMMT have misread the data, conflating average battery pack prices across all applications with those specific to electric cars. In the last 10 years, battery prices have fallen by 77%. BNEF also reports that passenger BEV battery pack prices fell below the $100/kWh price projected in 2021 in both 2024 and 2025, even with inflationary pressures.

Claim 5

SMMT

"Government set a target for all motorway service areas (MSAs) to have at least six ultra-rapid chargers by the end of 2023. By early 2025 – well past this deadline – only 70% of MSAs had achieved this level of provision" p.5



Source: DfT (2026), Electric vehicle public charging infrastructure statistics. HM Government (2022), Taking charge: the electric vehicle infrastructure strategy

T&E

Fails to mention...

Rapid and ultra-rapid chargers have been built out well ahead of demand, with 8,000 devices (and 10,500 plugs) installed by the end of 2025, above the 3,700 assessed as needed by DfT. Many CPOs have built their own sites from scratch along the motorway, including outside of MSAs. Across the UK's 70 motorways, 83% have rapid charging rollout at least 5 years ahead of demand.

Claim 6

SMMT *"Domestic electricity price risen from 17.2p/kWh Jan 2021 to 27.69p/kWh in Jan 2026" p.6*
(quote interpreted from data from graphic)

T&E

Fails to mention...

67.2% of households have a driveway and can access cheap overnight charging rates. Tariffs such as Octopus Go offer charging at 8.5p/kWh. Driving with a BEV is currently 46% cheaper than a petrol car. The charging industry also states that the cost of fuelling a petrol or diesel car has now surpassed charging an EV on the public network in most scenarios.

Claim 7

SMMT

"BloombergNEF anticipated BEV-ICE list price parity around 2025 but there is still a 17% price premium for EVs" p.6
(quote interpreted from data from graphic)

T&E

Fails to mention..

BNEF expects further price reductions in Europe as more models use significantly cheaper LFP batteries, as they do in China, where BEVs are already cheaper than petrol cars. This is already starting to be realised in the marketplace, with Autotrader reporting that for March, April and May this year, new EVs were on average cheaper than new petrol cars.

T&E

Fact check: Inaccurate

In a T&E commissioned report from 2021, BNEF found that BEV prices reach parity with internal combustion engine vehicles in all light vehicle segments between 2025-2027, with possibility of being pushed back to 2028 for certain segments. **This cannot be interpreted as ever having been anticipating parity by 2025.**

Summary

In their publication, the SMMT argues that a range of market and economic factors justify bringing forward the review of the ZEV mandate and further weakening its overall ambition.

However, as this briefing has shown, many of the claims used to support that argument rely on misleading interpretations of the evidence, selective use of data, or information that does not withstand scrutiny. Claims that targets have been missed are particularly misleading. Manufacturers have met compliance requirements, making use of the flexibilities and mechanisms that the industry itself has lobbied hard to secure in recent years.

Changes made to the mandate in 2025 already reduced the policy's ambition significantly. Further weakening it would risk slowing the transition, undermining investor confidence, and jeopardising the industrial growth needed for the UK automotive sector to remain competitive in the years ahead.

Given the factual errors, weak sourcing, and selective presentation of evidence throughout the report, the **SMMT's case for rolling back ambition fails to pass the test.**

Section 2

The need for ambition and certainty

The need for ambition and certainty

£50	**The difference in cost to fully charge an EV compared to filling a tank of petrol.** ICE drivers are between 4-9 times more vulnerable price spiked from fuel crises than those with an electric car.[1]
58%	**The share of the UK's oil imports used in transport.** With over 70% of this demand coming from road transport.[2]
£23 billion	**How much has been announced in EV and battery manufacturing investments in the UK.** Much of this is based on the certainty provided by the clear regulation of the ZEV mandate.[3]

1 T&E, £50 saving a month: EVs shield UK drivers from rising oil prices
2 T&E, State of Transport 2026
3 T&E, Carmakers' EV investments: Is Europe falling behind?

T&E

ZEV Mandate is a policy success

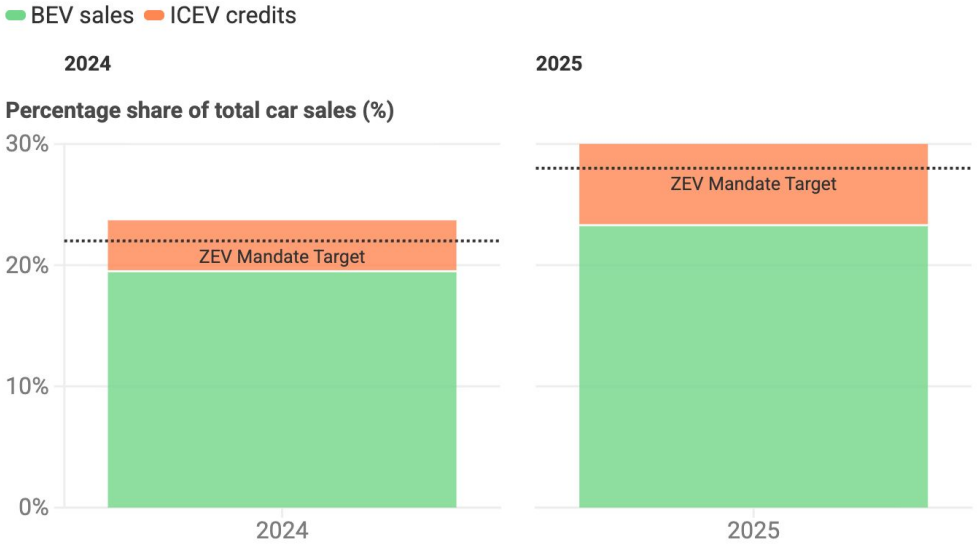
There are **over 2 million electric cars** on the road in the UK, about 5.8% of the total fleet. Nearly a quarter, **470,000, of these were registered in 2025 alone**.

Rollout has surged over the last two years, with car makers not just meeting the ZEV mandate, but exceeding it. **23.4% of new cars in the UK were electric in 2025** the highest share of any large car market in Europe.

The ZEV mandate has been crucial for providing certainty for investment, the building out of infrastructure and for encouraging carmakers to bring affordable, attractive models to market.

The market has responded positively to the mandate with car makers growing BEV share through an ever-improving product line-up

Overall, BEV sales grew over 20% between 2024 and 2025 but this hides even higher growth for some OEMs



Source: T&E analysis of DataForce sales data

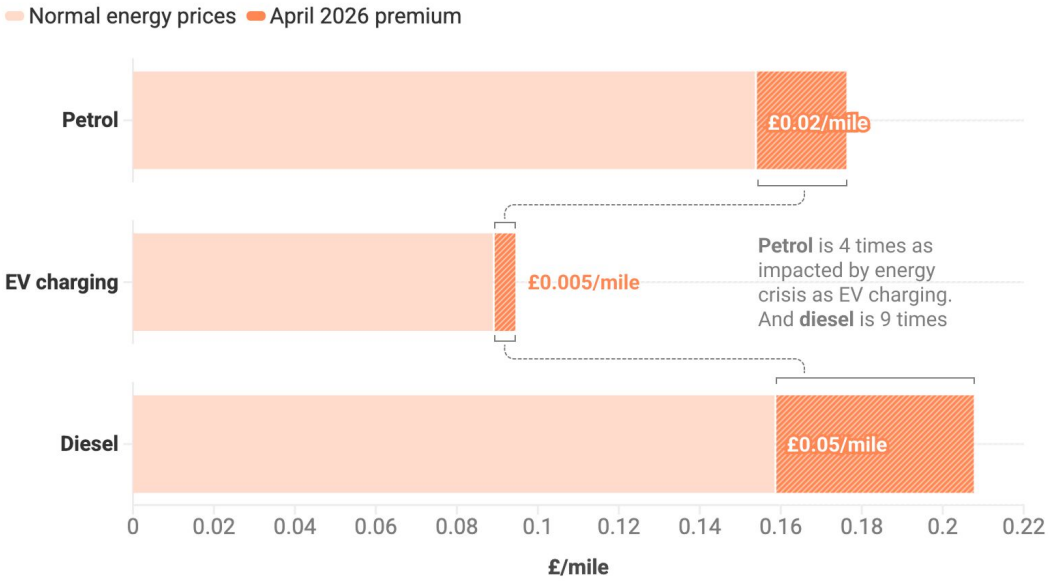
Moving quickly on EVs means protecting household expenditure

Further weakening of the ZEV mandate would slow consumer uptake of cheaper-to-run EVs, **reducing household savings on fuel and maintenance costs.**

Drivers would remain exposed to volatile petrol and diesel prices, increasing vulnerability to global oil market shocks.

T&E analysis shows that petrol drivers are around **four times more exposed to energy price shocks than EV drivers**, while EV drivers currently save around £50 per month on energy costs compared with petrol motorists.

UK petrol cars four times more affected by energy crisis than EVs, diesel cars nine times



Source: T&E analysis

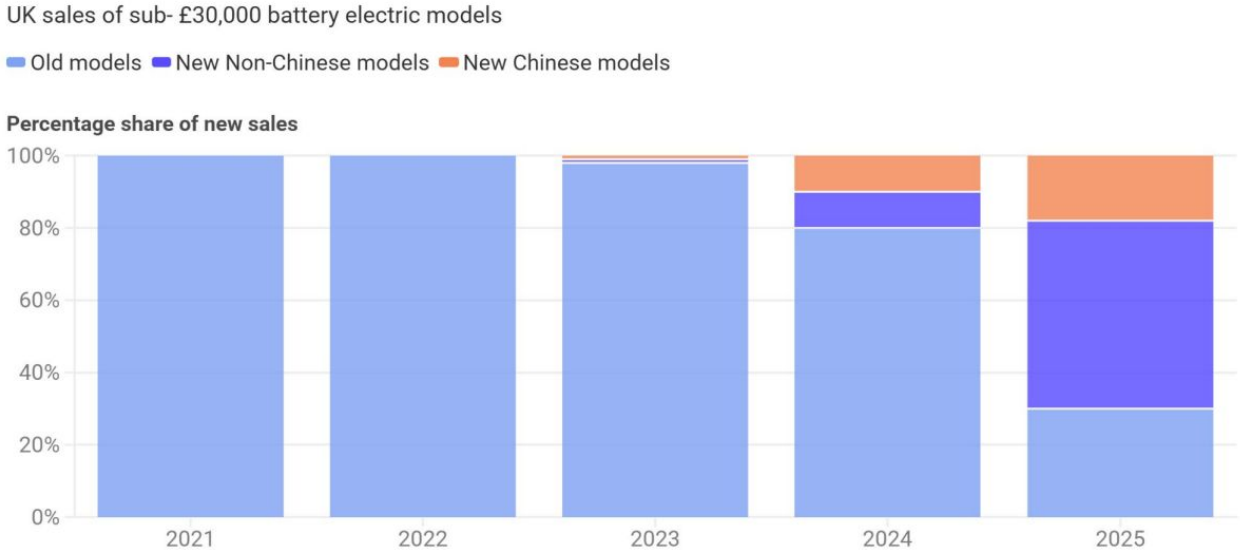
Uncertainty threatens UK competitiveness

However, with significant changes already made to the mandate in 2025, there is a risk of removing the certainty that the policy is intended to create.

Annual reviews do not create the stable environment needed for UK industry to thrive and compete.

In 2021, every electric car sold in the UK available under £30,000 in the small and medium segments came from Chinese carmakers. Regulatory policy have brought European and UK carmakers back into competition.[1]

Strong EV policies are key to maintaining competitiveness against global manufacturers



1 T&E UK analysis of Dataforce data

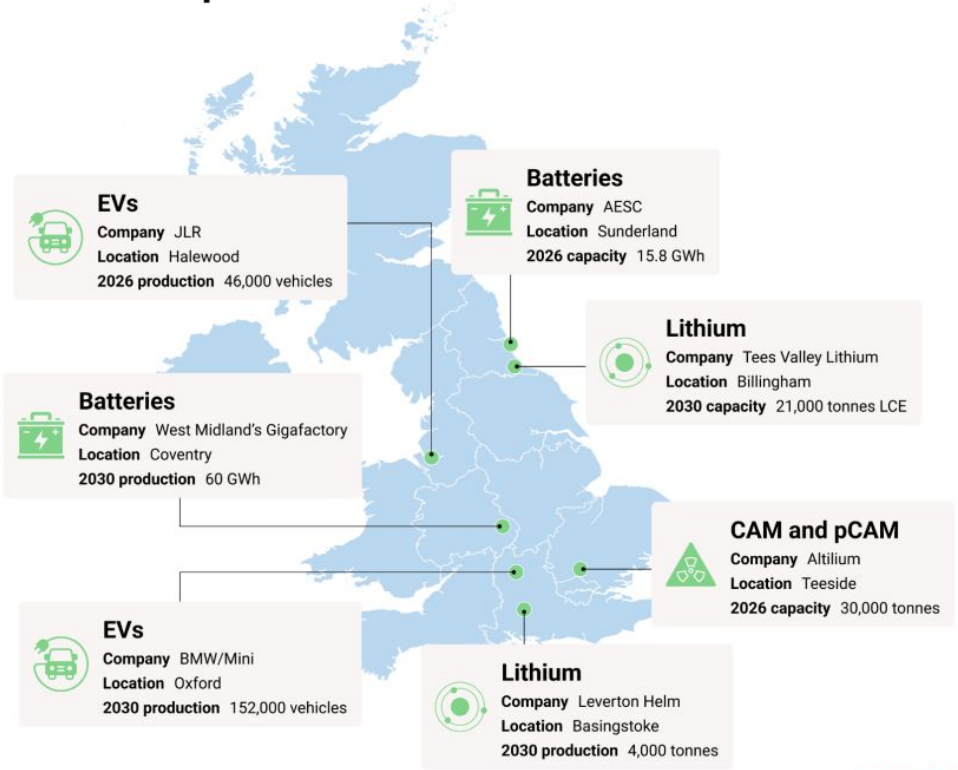
Supply chains require certainty

Weakening the mandate would undermine investment certainty across the EV supply chain, putting at risk major battery manufacturing projects that depend on strong, long-term market signals.

A slower transition would leave the UK more **reliant on imported batteries and materials** limiting the development of domestic supply chains

Delays to EV industrialisation could **jeopardise growth i**n critical sectors, including battery processing, lithium refining and e-motor manufacturing,

Main EV Value chain plants



Source: T&E

Infrastructure roll-out could begin to slow

Without the guarantee of the number of EVs that can be expected to be on the road in the coming years, **the case for building public charging infrastructure ahead of demand collapses.**

The charging sector has already issued warnings about these concerns, with one operator **cancelling £12 million** of investment in Hull, Bradford, Liverpool and Scotland in one month alone due to this uncertainty.

The more the private sector is deterred from investment now, the increase in public funds that will be required down the line.

THE TIMES

Charging firms will pull plug on UK if net zero car targets are cut

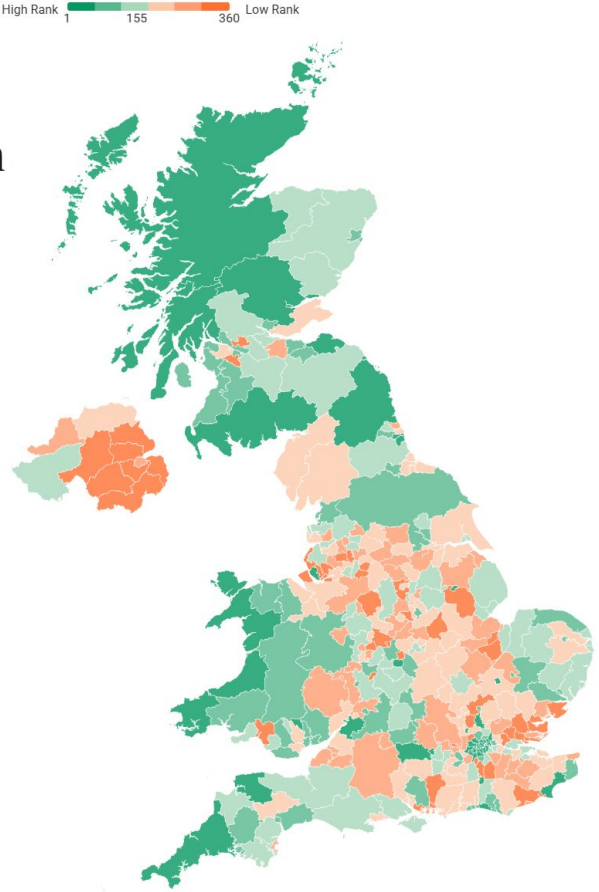
Companies say the government must not water down plans to end new petrol and diesel car sales by 2030

In a report last year, T&E UK highlighted the lottery that currently exists across the UK in public charging provision.

Clarity and certainty on the roll out of EVs over the coming years is a key element in ensuring that gaps in the network are filled and that EVs can work equitably nationwide.

Some local authorities are falling behind on charge point rollout

Gaps in the network follow no simple North/South or Urban/Rural divide but result from local, commercial and government conditions.
National government must now use the remainder of the £400 million dedicated to charging in the 2025 Spending Review to target those areas currently left behind in public charging provision



Source: Office for National Statistics (Boundaries), DfT (2025), Electric vehicle public charging infrastructure statistics: April 2025 • We ranked LA on an equal weighting of charge points per person and charge points per BEV in each LA

Summary

It is clear that the evidence does not support the case for weakening the ZEV mandate. Many of the claims used by SMMT to justify a revised or slower transition rely on selective and misleading data or fail to accurately portray today's market.

The UK's transition to electric vehicles is delivering clear benefits. Drivers are gaining access to cheaper-to-run cars, reducing their exposure to volatile fossil fuel prices. The growth of EV uptake, charging infrastructure and investment across the supply chain demonstrates that the policy is working as intended.

The facts point in one direction, that we need more ambition, not less. The economic, industrial and consumer case for electrification is stronger today than when the ZEV mandate was introduced. Against a backdrop of volatile fossil fuel markets and growing geopolitical uncertainty, accelerating the shift to electric vehicles is one of the most effective ways to improve energy security, reduce costs for households and support domestic industry. The Government must focus not on slowing the transition, but on making it accessible to more people by maintaining ambition and through measures such as social leasing.