

NEWS RELEASE

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States buying power could help to make electric cars affordable for all, says Environment Minister

Jersey's recently appointed Environment and Planning Minister has been putting low-carbon living to the test ... a road test.

St Saviour Deputy Rob Duhamel took to the wheel of one of Jersey Electricity's all-electric smart cars for an entire week to truly assess the potential of low carbon electric cars in Jersey which JE is spearheading in the second stage of a four-year trial of the Mercedes ev.

The second generation smart fortwo ed 451's performance statistics include acceleration of 0-30mph in 5.8 secs and a top speed electronically limited to 62mph.

The Minister also trialled the first generation electric smart back in 2009 and his verdict today: 'With an increased range of up to 138 miles, they are well suited to Jersey's roads. The car responded well, easily dealing with the steep hill returning with a heavy load of groceries after the weekly shop. There is a little kick down switch which gives you an added power boost when you need it,' said Deputy Duhamel.

'The car is well finished and comfortable inside with plenty of leg room. The main stumbling block at present is price. The cost of all makes of electric cars is currently a major disincentive to many people in comparison with their petrol counterparts.

'The public need to be incentivised to switch. The UK Government is offering £5,000 grants or subsidies but that is unlikely to happen here. I think a better way to help make electric cars more affordable would be for the States to use its buying power to purchase them in bulk and pass the discount on to local motorists.

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‘This principle could be used to reduce our carbon emissions in many areas and save money for the States and the individual. We have recently expanded the Home Energy Efficiency Service. Funded from a £0.5million grant from Jersey Electricity and revenue from the Vehicle Emissions Duty, the service provides grants to certain groups for improving home insulation. We should be encouraging more people to do this with the States bulk buying insulation materials at up to 60% discount and passing on these savings to householders.

‘As with many environmentally friendly, technological advances, I think electric cars will take a while to become established, with the really keen environmentalists leading the way and then, as manufacturing costs start to fall, more and more following until you hit that critical mass and it becomes the accepted norm.

‘We need to be planning now for that time. As demand builds and prices fall, we have time to plan to use our natural resources to provide “home-grown” renewable electricity. Both wind and tidal power offer real opportunities. We are already working on practical ways to exploit these natural power sources.’

Jersey Electricity CEO Chris Ambler said: ‘We are delighted Environment Minister Duhamel took the trouble to test the electric car. As a public utility we feel we have a moral obligation to go on reducing the Island’s carbon emissions and feel strongly that electrification of transport is the next big step.

‘When that time comes we will be more than ready to meet the demand as well as helping to make electric vehicles as practical and affordable to run as possible.

‘We have so far received nothing but positive reactions from the many individuals who have taken up the opportunity to test the electric smarts while we have them on trial and I hope many more drivers will do so.’

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