

'Our Friends Electric'?

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Mitsubishi's plug-in hybrid Outlander PHEV - an example of top class electric propulsion technology - but UK demand has been stifled by unhelpful withdrawal of the 'plug-in' grant...



UK drivers buy more cars but are turned away from plug-in hybrids as a vital buying incentive is withdrawn...

Robin Roberts tells the story.

As the Geneva motor show opens, figures show UK car sales beat expectations and rose 1.4 percent February, boosted by rising sales of petrol and alternative-fuelled cars, according to the SMMT.

Sales rose to 81,969 units from 80,805 in February 2018.

In Wales, sales went up 6.44% last month and eased the year so far to a 1.98% increase with 2,396 registrations in what is a short month and traditionally quiet one before the new plate in March.

Demand for alternatively fuelled vehicles continued to surge, up 34.0% and marking the 22nd consecutive month of growth for the segment as new and existing cutting-edge models attracted buyers into showrooms. Registrations of zero-emission electric cars enjoyed particular growth, more than doubling to 731 units, although they still accounted for less than 1% of the market (0.9%).

Meanwhile, in the four months since the October 2018 reform to the Plug-in Car Grant, the market for plug-in hybrid electric vehicles (PHEVs) has only grown by 1.7%, compared with 29.5% over the first 10 months of 2018. This suggests that removing the incentive for PHEVs is having an adverse effect.

Mike Hawes, SMMT Chief Executive, said, "It's encouraging to see market growth in February, albeit marginal, especially for electrified models. Car makers have made huge commitments to bring to market an ever-increasing range of exciting zero and ultra low emission vehicles and give buyers greater choice. These cars still only account for a fraction of the overall market, however, so if the UK is to achieve its electrification ambitions, a world-class package of incentives and infrastructure is needed. **The recent removal of the**



plug-in car grant from plug-in hybrids was a backward step and sends entirely the wrong message. Supportive, not punitive measures are needed, else ambitions will never be realised.”

The news comes as vehicle manufacturers prepare to launch some 14 all-new electric and plug-in models to a global audience at the Geneva Motor Show today.

Already there are around 40 plug-in models on the market in the UK, with more than 20 more expected to arrive in showrooms in 2019.