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MG4 EV SE Long Range – Road Test

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Chris Adamson takes to the wheel of the MG4 EV – SE Long Range...

(Text and Photos: By and copyright Chris Adamson – apart from photos as indicated, from MG Motors).



Since its launch only a few months ago the new MG4 all-electric hatchback has been Hoovering up awards left right and centre – Chris Adamson, who has driven every new MG over the past 40 years, investigates what all the fuss is about.

With every car manufacturer seemingly going down the sports utility route for its new products (and that includes MG) it's a bit of a surprise to find MG reverting to more familiar (if mundane) family hatchback territory for its latest electric entrant.

Most observers have been disappointed that MG has lost some of its individuality by turning out a succession of rather androgenous models such as the GS, ZS and HS so the MG4 is an opportunity for the designers to go a little bit off-piste.

And it has certainly been gaining a lot of attention among the motoring press with its trophy cabinet now containing accolades such as: Bargain of the Year at the 2022 Top Gear Awards; Best Value Electric Car, Car of the Year and Readers Favourite from DrivingElectric; at Electrifying.com it landed the Best Small Family Car, Best Value Car and Overall Car of the Year; carwow also named it Car of the Year; and north of the border The Association of Scottish Motoring Writers named it their Best EV under £40,000 and the Scots are not noted for handing out praise lightly.

The group of established MG enthusiasts I showed the MG4 to during an extended test drive had mixed views about the looks, some loved the sharper styling, especially the arrow-head nose and multi-layer rear, while others found it just too overpowering.



Photo: MG Motors.

In terms of overall size, the MG4 is a large hatchback, something you recognise when trying to park it due in part to the lack of rear three-quarter visibility, obscured by the large C pillar - this is where the 360 degree camera on the range topping Trophy models comes into its own.

Side rubbing strips emphasise the bulk and, as well as giving it a raised appearance, also have a practical purpose by containing lots of road splashes.

The steep angle of the bonnet offers excellent forward vision but does give the driver the impression they are steering a windscreen - front parking sensors would have been helpful.

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The interior also garnered mixed reviews- some hated the flat-screen technology while



others were more willing to embrace the modern feel.

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For me it's a mixed bag - yes there is plenty of information at hand on the two screens (especially the instrument panel with its rolling range information and driving mode indication) but [at other times the requirement to touch surfaces and scroll through menus to get to the setting you want is extremely distracting for the driver and frankly highly dangerous.](#)

My recommendation would be to spend a few minutes before setting off to select your preferred driving mode and cabin settings.

For example, the drive mode (with options for normal, eco, sport, snow and custom) automatically re-sets every time to normal and the highest level of four brake regeneration settings (including an adaptive option) - if you want anything different you are going to need to scroll through the menu options.



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Where there was no argument from observers was over the generous amount of cabin space with loads of room for front and rear seat occupants. The only slight reservation being the reduced rear head room caused by the coupé style slope of the roof – but this is only going to encumber the tallest of passengers.

A selection of small bins and cubby holes set around the better quality feeling interior provide storage space for odds and ends although there is nothing really suitable for larger objects apart from the deep central console box.

One passenger made the observation that there are no internal grab handles which makes it more awkward for those with mobility issues to get in and out.



Luggage space over the low entry boot is average but not exceptional at 363 litres (12.82 cu.ft), but thankfully MG has arranged the rear seats to split and fold flat with just a slight step-up from the standard load space – this swells the load capacity to a very useful 1,177 litres (41.57 cu.ft).

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Installing the electric motor at the rear between the wheels precludes any underfloor storage in the boot and means a spare wheel is out of the question – with no engine up front I just wonder if there was ever scope to install a slim-line spare under the bonnet, similar to the MGF arrangement.

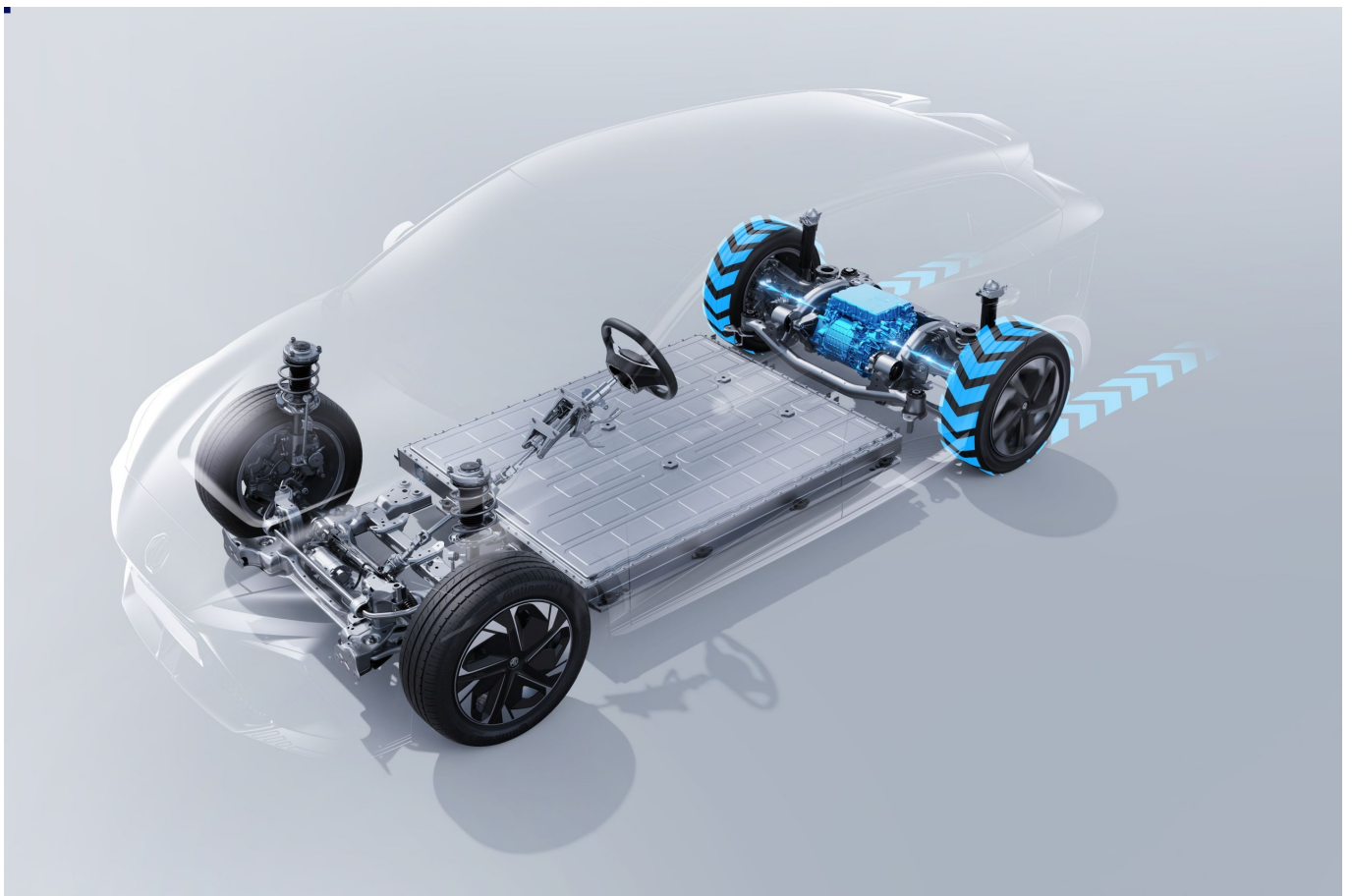




Photo: MG Motors.

ON THE ROAD

Throughout my test period almost everyone asked me the same two questions about the MG4 – the price (which we will come to later) and the range – which is an issue we now need to address.

In the SE trim I was testing, the MG4 comes with a longer-range 64 kWh nickel cobalt manganese battery pack (located in the floor). MG claims a potential of 281 miles combined on a full charge, but this must be in perfect conditions on a nice comfortable climate day. In the depths of winter when headlights were needed even during the day, windscreen wipers were in intermittent use and ambient temperatures required the climate control to be on full blast to keep occupants warm and windscreens clear the best I could achieve was the equivalent of 233 miles on 100 per cent of the battery charge.

Over a series of mixed condition journeys (urban, country and multi-lane roads) I discovered the Eco setting with a medium level of braking worked out the most efficient returning 2.3 miles of actual travel for each per cent of battery charge used.

The factory set Normal driving mode with a high level of braking isn't far short of the Eco option and the difference in performance is negligible.

You really only notice a significant difference in Sport mode where this faster responding option immediately dropped my predicted range by 15 miles and when varying between modes over a longer journey reduced the likely total distance to 180 miles.

However, all these figures are academic as no-one is going to risk getting down to zero battery life and advice from the energy boffins is that to prolong battery life they shouldn't be run below 20 per cent and re-charged only up to 80 per cent on a regular basis which gives a real-world, best practice range of something like 140 miles between charges.

When it comes to re-charging, MG has moved away from the connector hidden under the MG badge on the grille and installed a conventional flap where a fuel filler would normally be located. A clever feature is that surrounding the connection is a series of four lights which indicate the level of battery charge – this is a quick and simple way to check the charge level in the battery from the exterior of the vehicle.



When it comes to re-charging times MG quotes nine hours from 10 to 100 per cent using the usual domestic 7 kW home chargers, 60 minutes from 10 to 80 per cent on a 50 kW public re- charging point and 35 minutes on a rapid 150 kW charger.

I used a standard 13 amp 240 domestic socket to add a little top-up on a regular basis but this isn't really practical as this slow charge will only add around 3.5 per cent per hour and isn't sufficient for a full overnight charge – that will take 26 hours.



Installing a home wall charging unit is going to be a must for anyone contemplating an EV – and this will add around £800 to £1,000.

After range, everyone wants to know how the MG4 handles and here there is generally good



news.

It's now well established that electric cars are quick off the mark thanks to the instant torque of the electric motor, MG placing their 203 PS (150 kW) motor in the rear and driving the rear wheels which gives it a more sporting sensation.

After getting away from the line to 30 mph in 3.5 seconds (which will put a lot of hot hatchbacks to shame) the MG4 seamlessly reaches 60 mph in 7.7 seconds and could go on to 100 mph so there is plenty of responsive power to play with.

Driving the rear wheels tends to give it a slight inclination towards oversteer but nothing detrimental to an engaging driving experience. The light assisted steering (personally I would have preferred a little more weight) makes for instant direction changes and rewards a press on driving style through sweeping country curves while parking is effortless thanks to a tight turning circle.

The near even front to rear weight distribution (in part due to the rear mounted motor) also makes for predictable handling and a comfortable, firm ride quality, eliminating the body roll often detected on rival SUVs.

The absence of engine noise on EVs often exposes excesses of road and wind noise previously hidden under the sound of a combustion engine - but on the MG4 there is very little, the designers and engineers having done a fine job in creating a slippery body shape and placing sound deadening materials.

Finally, we come to the question of the purchase price - as the MG4's list of accolades includes several related to it being a budget motoring champion.

Inevitably any EV is going to be more expensive than a petrol or diesel alternative (normally adding around £5,000) but when compared to rivals the MG4 can claim to be one of the lowest priced in the sector.

At the moment there aren't many hatchback EV rivals to get a comprehensive comparison as most of its direct competitors will be sports utilities.

The early front runner in the class, the VW ID.3 (which hasn't done well against the MG4 in handling and packaging comparisons) will set you back an extra £5,000 while even the usual bargain basement offerings from the likes of Kia and Hyundai struggle to get close on price when matching like for like specification.



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To some people paying £28,495 (as tested) for an MG may seem a little excessive but for this you get a lot of kit such as an active grille that closes at speed to increase range, rear parking sensors, electrically adjusted and heated door mirrors, climate control, Apple Car Play, Android Auto and the MG Pilot package with adaptive cruise control, emergency braking, lane keep assist, lane departure warning, traffic jam assist, intelligent speed limiter and driver attention alert.





Verdict:

In terms of what you get for your money in an electric vehicle the MG4 certainly lives-up to its billing as the best value family EV currently on the market – that’s even before you take into account the seven year warranty.

It is also a comfortable, spacious and easy to handle family sized hatchback that with the current state of battery technology is able to match most of its rivals in terms of range and re-charging.

Wheels-Alive Tech Spec:

MG4 EV five-door hatchback SE Long Range

Motor: Rear-mounted rear-wheel drive synchronous electric motor

Battery: 64 kWh nickel cobalt manganese under floor mounted

Power: 203PS (150kW)

Torque: 184lb ft (250Nm)

Performance:

0 – 60 mph: 7.7 seconds

Top Speed: 100 mph

Driving Efficiency: 3.8 miles / kWh (Combined official)

Driving Range: 281miles (450 km) – 233 miles on test (Winter conditions)

Recharging: 7kW charger 10 to 100 per cent in nine hours / 50 kW charger 10 to 80 per cent in 60 minutes / 150 kW fast charger 10 to 80 per cent in 35 minutes.

Price (On the Road): £28,495
