New Toyota Hilux – News and First Drive Impressions

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The Latest Version of the Legendary Vehicle that is the Toyota Hilux...

Assessed by David Miles (Miles Better News Agency) – who also explains

the UK taxation situation relating to ‘Light Commercial Vehicles’.

The Toyota Hilux has been the mainstay of the global Pick-Up market for almost 50years. Launched in 1968, more than 18 million have been sold worldwide. To date and closer to home in 2015 the top selling Hilux range sold 34,000 units in Europe, representing 23.1% of the market sector.

Specifically in the UK in 2015 the Hilux models sold a sector-leading 8,642 units in an area of the market worth a total 40,558 sales, a 20% increase over 2014. That growth has continued for the first six months of this year with almost 23,000 Pick-Ups sold, a further 11% increase over the same period last year.

So far this year Toyota has sold 3,043 units of their outgoing Hilux models with the all-new and eighth generation Hilux family of Pick-Ups arriving this month. Richard Seymour, Press Officer for Toyota GB, said at the Hilux UK media launch this week that for the remainder of this year they have a sales target of 4,500 units for the new range and in 2017 they expect to sell around 7,900 units in this growing market sector.

Just as versatile SUVs and Crossovers are driving up sales in the UK’s passenger new car market, so Pick-Ups are increasing sales in the light commercial vehicle sector. This is due to the popularity of Double Cab versions which combine 4WD SUV five seater accommodation, high specification, one-tonne load carrying versatility and their high towing capacity. They also have tax advantages for business users. They appeal to customers who need these dual role vehicles for business as a work-horse and for stylish family use. They are also popular with commercial towing operators, the leisure industry as well as the Police, Highways and Rescue Services, and in some countries they are used for Military purposes.

The increased demand for Pick-Ups and Double Cabs models in particular has fuelled the arrival of additional new or heavily revised existing models. Leading the way for UK sales so far this year is the revised Ford Ranger followed by the all-new Nissan Navara, the revised Mitsubishi L200, Isuzu D-Max, Toyota Hilux, VW Amarok, the new Fiat Fullback based on

the Mitsubishi L200, the Great Wall Steed and SsangYong Korando Sports. Renault will launch a Pick-Up range based on the Navara from their partnership with Nissan and Mercedes-Benz and Skoda are expected to launch their Double Cab ranges shortly.

Before quoting prices for the new generation Hilux range an explanation is needed on how these vehicles incur taxes. Pick-Ups of all types are classed as Light Commercial Vehicles and that governs their on-the-road price, road tax and if applicable company car tax. Retail private buyers will pay VAT, businesses will not, VED road tax is a standard £225 a year charge whatever the CO2 emissions. Benefit-in-Kind company car tax is generally around, depending on the specification, £630 a year for the standard rate income tax payer and double that for a higher rate customer.

New Hilux commercial vehicle on-the- road prices, these do not include Vat, start at £19,177 for the Active specification Single Cab and rise to £29,435 for the Invincible X Double Cab automatic. Retail customer's on-the-road prices, with VAT included, will pay £22,955 to £35,265.

All versions are powered by a new 2.4-litre D-4D turbodiesel 150 hp four cylinder engine with six speed manual and automatic transmissions in the range and all have 4WD. All models are covered by a new five-year 100,000 mile warranty.

With a wide range of prices there is a wide range of models. There are three body styles; the two seater Single Cab which is expected to account for 20% of Hilux sales in the UK, the four seater Extra Cab with 5% of sales and the five seater Double Cab will be the choice of 75% of customers.

There are four specification levels, depending on the body style. The base Active level is available for all three body versions and is expected to be the choice of 25% of customers. Going up the range, and only available for Double Cabs, is the Icon level which will take 10% of sales, Invincible 45% and Invincible X 20%. Across the range there is expected to be a 50/50 sales split between manual and automatic transmissions but Double Cab customers

mainly choose an automatic gearbox. The expected best selling new Hilux model will be the Invincible Double Cab 2.4 litre automatic costing £26,173 on-the-road excluding VAT. Retail customers for the same model will pay £31,350 with the VAT content included.

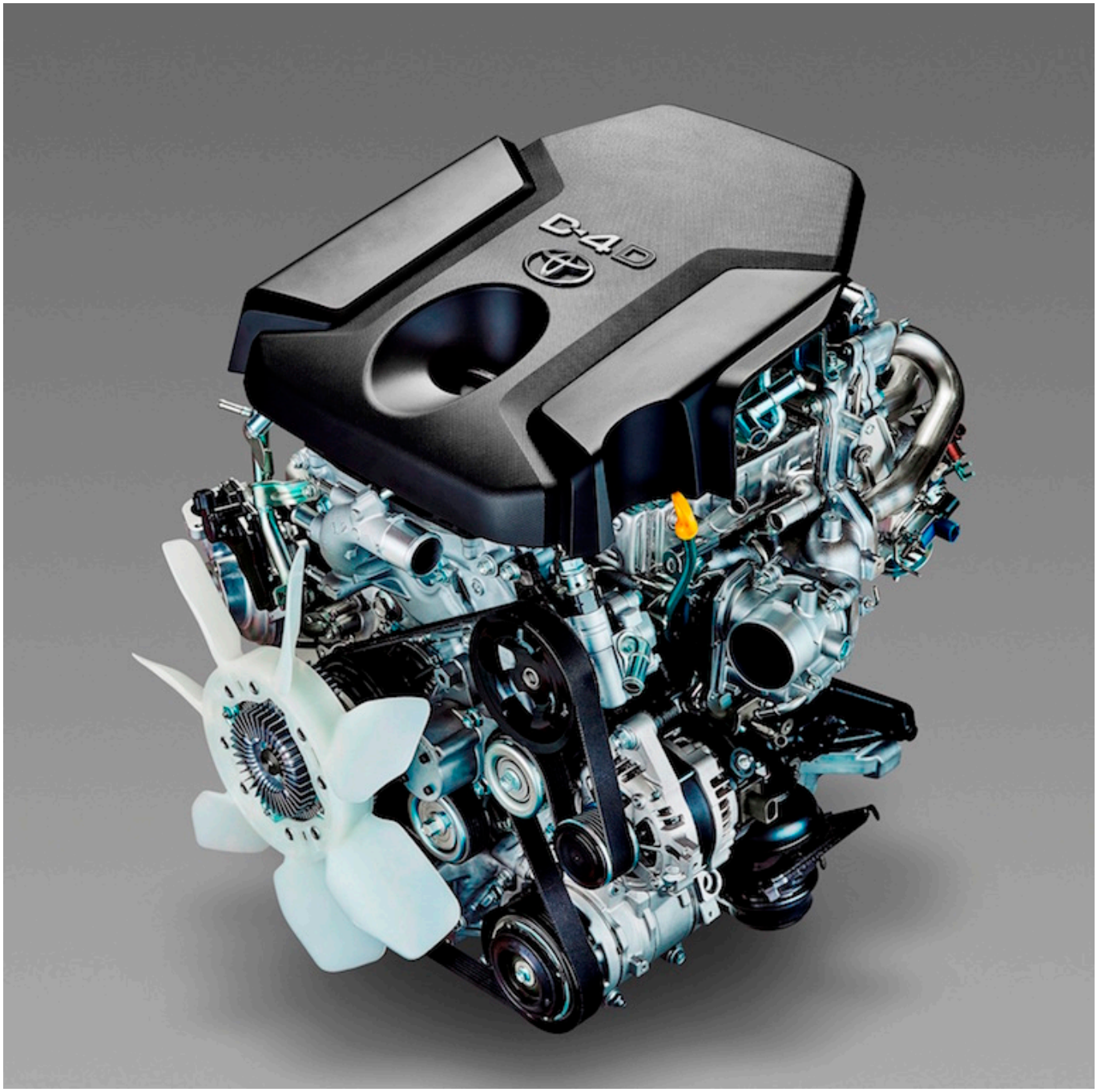


The new Hilux is longer, wider and lower than previous versions with an increased towing capacity of 3,500 kg (7,716 lb) from the end of this year, although currently it is only homologated at 3,200 kg (7,055 lb). The payload, depending on the body style, varies from 1,030 kg (2,271 lb) for the Single Cab up to 1,055 kg (2,326 lb) for the higher spec Double Cab. It has a new, stronger and 20% torsionally stiffer ladder frame chassis, and the cargo deck is tougher to shrug off heavy duty use. The rear suspension has been revised for a more compliant and comfortable ride but still keeps its leaf-spring design for durability. The

exterior design still retains that upright hard-wearing business workhorse image, although the styling lines have been softened to appeal to owners who in the past might have opted for a more stylish large SUV. The 18-inch alloy wheels and other brightwork finishes on the top spec models add significantly to its improved kerb appeal.



Inside there is more room, particularly in the rear where three passengers have ample leg and headroom and all the interior trim, fixtures and fittings are more passenger car like than commercial vehicle. In the front is a high level fascia and on most versions right in the centre of that is a tablet style information screen. This operates various functions including the Toyota Touch 2 with Go sat-nav and connectivity system which is standard on the top spec version and a £750 extra cost option for the Icon and Invincible levels. Electric front windows and air conditioning are standard-fit on all models and cruise control on versions from Icon upwards.



The 2.4 litre, 150 hp four cylinder turbodiesel engine is also new and it produces significantly more torque than the outgoing 2.5 and 3.0 litre diesel units, raised from 343 to 400 Nm (253 to 295 lb.ft) and delivered from just 1,600 rpm. Both the six speed manual and automatic gearboxes have been revised for smoother use, with slick gearchanges, and the

transmission is upgraded to support the engine's higher torque output. All UK versions have a high and low ratio transfer box offering on demand 2WD High, 4WD High and 4WD Low ratios.

All versions have a locking rear differential for improved traction off-road, Hill Descent Control, Hill-Start Assist, Active Traction Control and Trailer Sway Control. The best selling Invincible and Invincible X specification has Toyota Safety Sense which includes a pre-collision system with pedestrian detection, lane departure warning and road sign assist.

At the media launch I got behind the wheel of the Hilux Invincible Double Cab 2.4 litre automatic, the most popular variant in the range. This is priced at £26,173 on-the-road excluding VAT if you are a business user or £31,350 if you are a retail customer.

On the roads around The Chilterns, in soaking wet and occasionally dry conditions, the Hilux handled predictably although care needs to be taken during cornering on wet roads as rear end grip in 2WD can be skittish as it is with most unladen Pick-Ups with leaf rear springs. Although the rear suspension has been changed, with longer rear springs to soften the ride without reducing the durability, it cannot match in terms of ride comfort the conventional coil spring rear suspensions used on SUVs and the new Nissan Navara Double Cab.

Although stronger with a new ladder frame chassis and strengthened load bay, the new Hilux felt much lighter and therefore more agile. With improved steering response the road holding was generally trustworthy on winding roads and more car-like to drive than before. In-town travel was SUV-like and its increased size didn't cause any issues negotiating traffic crowded streets or finding a parking space, unlike the new heavyweight Nissan Navara Double Cab which seems huge and ponderous in the same conditions.

I also had a chance to drive the Hilux Double Cab on a long off-road driving route covering steep gravel and muddy forestry tracks, plus fording a river in a country estate near High Wycombe. This was no lightweight off-road course; it was the sort of driving test adventure

we expect from the likes of Land Rover. With the new Hilux all the latest mechanical components enhanced by electronics such as Hill Descent Control made light work of negotiating the tough terrain, with its all wheel drive traction. Whilst the ride can be firm on-road, off-road the longer suspension travel gave really good chassis articulation, maximising grip traversing deep tracks and other natural obstacles. The precise power steering and smooth auto gearbox also helped to make light work of the off-road heavy going.

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The lighter weight of the new vehicle has benefits for the performance of the new 2.4-litre D-4D turbodiesel engine. With 150 hp and 400 Nm (295 lb.ft) of torque from 1,600 rpm the acceleration response from low to medium speeds was willing – and better than the official performance figures suggest. Top speed is a modest 106 mph and zero to 62mph is just as modest, taking 12.8 seconds. However the Combined Cycle fuel consumption figures look better with an official 36.2 mpg with the automatic transmission. My test drive returned a real life figure of 34.6 mpg and a brief drive with the six speed manual version retuned 36.9 mpg against a 40.4mpg official figure. The auto model has CO2 emissions of 204 g/km, and 185 g/km with a manual gearbox. VED road tax is a standard flat rate charge for each at £225 every year because of its Light Commercial Vehicle status.



VERDICT

Overall the World's most famous and best selling Pick-Up has certainly been improved in all areas. It will appeal to those who need to use their work vehicle for family life as well. With the demise of the Land Rover Defender the latest Toyota Hilux Double Cab could be a very credible replacement.

For: All new throughout and improved in all areas, higher specification, roomier, more torque, better fuel economy, new 5-year warranty, impressive off-road performance.
Against: Its workhorse body style might not persuade customers to swap out of a big SUV, better ride comfort but still firm, skittish rear end traction in 2WD on wet roads during acceleration.

Milestones and Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

Toyota Hilux Invincible Double Cab, 2.4-litre diesel automatic. (Best selling UK model).

Engine: New 2.4 litre, four cylinder turbodiesel, 150 hp, 400 Nm (295 lb.ft) of torque from 1,600 rpm.

Transmission: Six speed auto, 4WD with high/low ratio transfer box.

Performance:

0-62mph: 12.8 seconds.

Top speed: 106 mph.

Fuel consumption: Combined cycle 36.2 mpg (34.6 mpg on test).

Emissions and taxation: CO2 204 g/km, VED road tax £225, Benefit-in-Kind company car commercial vehicle tax 20/40% rates £630/£1,260.

Insurance Group: Tbc.

Warranty: 5 years/100,000 miles.

Dimensions/capacities: L 5,330 mm (17.49 ft), W 1,855 mm (6.09 ft), H 1,815 mm (5.95 ft), payload 1,055 kg (2,326 lb), braked towing weight 3,200 kg (7,055 lb) now – increases to 3,500 kg (7,716 lb) later this year.

Price: Retail £31,350, commercial user less VAT £26,173.