

POLLUTION

UK faces legal action for poor air quality

The European Commission has launched legal proceedings against the UK for failing to achieve air pollution limits.

The EU restrictions were meant to come into effect in 2010, but member states were able to get an extra five years' grace if they put in place plans to cut levels of NO₂. The UK admitted that the limits relating

to 16 of its zones, including London, could not be met by the revised deadline of 2015.

For many of these areas, the government believes the levels can be reached by 2020. In London, they admit it is likely to be 2025.

For the EU, this is far too long. It has decided to launch the first case against a member state for breaching the limits on NO₂.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Power storage facility made with used batteries

Sumitomo Corporation in Japan has developed the world's first large scale power storage system using used batteries from electric vehicles. The system, based on Yume-shima island in Osaka, will begin operations in spring.

The project has been chosen by the Japanese Ministry of the Environment as a model project for achieving renewable energy through battery storage.

It presents an opportunity to utilise the growing number of used EV batteries. Sumitomo teamed up with Nissan in 2010 to investigate how used

lithium-ion batteries could be incorporated into power storage systems.

The scheme's general manager Norihiko Nonaka said: "We are pleased to be a part of such an important verification project that can both utilise used EV batteries, and provide a large-scale power storage facility, which are important issues that need to be addressed for the future of renewable energy."



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New electric car for wheelchair users

The first electric car built for wheelchair users is going into production in the US. Kenguru vehicles measure seven feet long and five feet high (making them smaller than Smart Cars), and have no seats – drivers roll their chair into the car through a door that pops up at the back. The concept was originally developed in Hungary, but the founder relocated to the US in order to secure venture capital. The car, which has a 60-mile range and a maximum speed of 25mph, is expected to be available in 12 to 18 months.



LowCVP's Andy Eastlake LowCVP plays cupid

An important aspect of the work LowCVP do is working with the small companies developing the technology ideas way before they make it into the mainstream market for fleet vehicles. Old romantics that we are, I'm glad to report that the LowCVP was able to celebrate Valentine's week by helping to bring innovators and investors together at a match-making event in London.

The LowCVP recognised participants presenting low carbon and fuel efficient road transport innovations at ecoConnect's Cleantech Innovate 2014 Showcase. A wide range of British growth-oriented and venture-ready technology companies presented their ideas to an audience of investors, corporate buyers and others at what is the largest innovation showcase of its kind in the UK.

Speaking at the event, the energy and climate change minister Greg Barker said that the UK now has the sixth biggest share of the £3.4 trillion global market for low carbon goods and environmental services. Cleantech, indeed, is the UK's most dynamic and growing sector, estimated to be worth over £120 billion and a key driver of this country's future economic success. The sector as a whole already employs almost a million people and the low carbon automotive and fuels sectors have been an important part of this emerging success story.

From super-efficient electric powertrains to liquid-air engines and advances in fuel cells and refrigerated transport, the showcased innovations demonstrated the potential to cut carbon emissions, improve efficiency and lower costs in the road transport sector.

The winner of a LowCVP commendation as most impressive of the road transport-focused entries was Evolute Drives (Drive System Design) who, in recognition, have received free membership of the LowCVP for the coming year.

Evolute Drives is working to bring a new generation powertrain for electric vehicles to the market. The heart of the system is an alternate approach to powershifting (no torque interrupt) achieved by separating the existing functions of a synchroniser. The system, say Drive System Design, can mean a 10-15 per cent improvement in the range of electric vehicles.

The innovations showcased at the event were selected by an independent expert panel. I applaud the work of all of them, and particularly those – like Evolute Drives – with a road transport application. These included innovations from Amalyst; Autotrip Ltd; Dearman Engine Co Ltd; E-Car Club; Epicam Ltd; Revolve Technologies Ltd and Teva Motors. Watch out for these in the future as you select your next fleet of vehicles.

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