

LowCVP / Ricardo response to Press Coverage on Life Cycle CO2 Report

The study has received considerable media interest including an article in the Times on the 10th June 2011 that misrepresented the study findings using inappropriate analysis. In response to the article the LowCVP and Ricardo submitted a letter to the Times on the 13th June 2011 that reads:

Dear Sir

RE: Life cycle carbon emissions of Electric Vehicles

The article by Ben Webster, "Want a green car? Electric may not be the best choice", The Times, June 10, was in my view misleading in its representation of the findings of the recent Ricardo-Low Carbon Vehicle Partnership study on the life cycle carbon emissions of electric vehicles (EVs).

It is true that our analysis indicated a high level of embedded carbon in the production process for EVs, but this is significantly off-set by their comparatively lower carbon emissions in use as compared with conventional fossil fuelled cars. Whilst I would agree with Ben Webster's view that a requirement for a replacement battery during a vehicles useful life would significantly negate any carbon savings, we believe that this is unlikely for any volume produced vehicles and this has not been the case for the well-known battery electric hybrid vehicles in series production.

The major vehicle manufacturers offering electric vehicles have invested heavily in ensuring that the battery will last for the useful life of the vehicle. This is analogous to a modern petrol or diesel vehicle requiring an engine replacement. By effectively doubling the projected carbon emitted in manufacture, Ben Webster skews his argument on potential carbon savings in favour of fossil fuelled vehicles and against EVs. Electric Vehicles are not a panacea for low carbon transport but they offer a potentially attractive solution for city and urban based consumers.

The report highlights the need to focus future research on reducing the carbon emitted in manufacture and the importance of battery life. However, all current evidence suggests that volume produced EV's will offer a lower carbon alternative to fossil fuelled vehicles.

Yours faithfully

Prof. Neville Jackson
Chief Technology & Innovation Officer, Ricardo plc
Chairman, Low Carbon Vehicle Partnership

The LowCVP encourages robust analysis and debate on the future of low carbon transport and encourages those with an interest to examine the report and not base their conclusions on a press article.