

Will anyone save the UK car industry?

The UK government actively encouraged and supported by the opposition parties wants to shut down all the UK's manufacturing capacity to make petrol and diesel cars by 2030. It is true their method is to ban UK purchases of new vehicles, but the intent and the likely consequence is to close down the factories. That is nearly 800,000 jobs, plus all the jobs and factories making components.

The UK was a great centre for clean car diesel engines, that all have to close. Nor will the industry want the fuel tanks, drive trains, gearboxes and the rest that goes with an ICE model. Instead the UK will need batteries and electric motors needing very different suppliers. I read that the government is close to attracting a Jaguar battery plant. It will apparently cost several hundred million pounds of taxpayer subsidy, and will be just one of several battery factories we will need to try to replace the job losses from ending ICE cars. It runs the risk of setting a high cost for attracting any other battery plants. The UK becomes a soft touch in a weak position by moving to wipe out its current industry so early.

Remain who said a 10% tariff on UK car exports would do damage say nothing about the enormous damage the banning of ICE cars will do. Some in the industry worry they will face a tariff to export an electric car where they have imported the battery and much else and just screw it together. Again this is missing the main threat. Relying on electric cars when we do not have battery or other electric component manufacture will of course damage our industry. It's not the trade rules that demolish the industry. It is not being able to make most of car here.

The government needs to realise that asking the UK to retire popular technologies and replace with products the market cannot yet afford or want at scale will not save the planet but will gravely damage our industry. The UK should not lead the bans on ICE cars. We also need to understand that getting someone to prematurely write off an older ICE vehicle to buy a new battery car can add to world CO₂ unless they do many more miles than average. They may be unable to recharge with renewable electricity. There is no point in plugging it into the mains on a no wind day.