



Department for Transport

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From the Parliamentary
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Dear Afzal

Thank you for your letter of 7 October to the Transport Secretary enclosing correspondence from your constituent, Mr Tom Cheesewright, of 57 Osborne Road, Levenshulme, Manchester, M19 2DU about electric vehicle conversions. I am replying as the Minister responsible for this issue.

You will be aware that this Government is committed to working towards net zero emissions and this is supported by a growing trend for electric vehicles by the public. Naturally this trend will grow to include options such as the conversion of petrol and diesel vehicles to electric propulsion.

While the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) is responsible for registering vehicles and collecting Vehicle Excise Duty (VED), and the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) is responsible for vehicle standards, the setting of VED rates for electric vehicles is a matter for HM Treasury. Therefore, I hope you will appreciate that this area covers a number of government departments.

To help meet our legally binding climate change targets, the current VED system encourages the uptake of cars with low carbon dioxide emissions (CO₂). This is why users of zero and ultra-low emission cars have beneficial VED and company car tax rates in comparison to conventionally fuelled alternatives. However, the setting of VED rates needs to balance this with simplicity, fairness and deliverability. As with all taxes, VED rates are kept under review.

The DVLA registers vehicles as required by legislation, which states that light passenger or light goods (M1 and N1) type approved vehicles with a CO₂ emissions figure first registered on or after March 2001 must be taxed according to that CO₂ figure.

The legislation further states that the CO2 figure recorded at first registration is not affected by any modification to the vehicle. This means that M1 and N1 type approved vehicles with a recorded CO2 emissions figure first registered on or after 1 March 2001 cannot move into an electric taxation class when the vehicle has been converted to an electric mode of propulsion.

While the law prevents the DVLA from amending details on the vehicle's registration certificate (V5C or 'log book'), systems are in place to update Clean Air Zone (CAZ) databases to allow any relevant exemptions to be applied.

Vehicles not first registered outside of these type approval rules, can have their taxation class changed to Electric Vehicle if the application to do so can be supported by evidence showing that the original engine and all ancillary parts have been removed. As a minimum, the accepted evidence must be either an itemised invoice of the work carried out, written confirmation on headed paper from the garage/converter detailing the work carried out or an inspection report provided for insurance purposes. If the application is accepted, the DVLA will amend the details on the V5C and update CAZ databases.

Also, and as is the case with all vehicles, keepers must ensure that their vehicles are compliant with the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986, as amended, and the Road Vehicles Lighting Regulations 1989, as amended. Vehicles are also subject to MOT requirements to ensure road safety.

It may be useful to explain that the current DVSA/MOT test will test a vehicle as it is presented and will inspect that vehicle to required standards before issuing an outcome. The test will inspect components and their condition. However, electrical systems capability approval is an entirely different requirement. At present, the MOT test does not assess whether electrical components (often of a high voltage) salvaged from vehicle write-offs are being used safely in vehicles. As such, there would be concern, for example, if components are being used that are not from the same system manufacturer. Your constituent suggests that swapping to electric propulsion is a simple operation that can be carried out at home, but such conversions are usually completed by specialist operators at a cost. Such a conversion would also affect other vehicle systems, including braking and steering, that would affect handling capabilities.

There are clear environmental and cost effective benefits to having an electric engine fitted to a vehicle but, at present, converting a vehicle to run on electric power is expensive, complicated and a risk to road safety if not carried out to correct standards.

My officials have discussed such conversions, including the retrofitting of engines and the approval of electric propulsion systems into existing vehicles. The DVLA has been involved in those discussions from the view point of what information it can record that would assist with meeting the net zero emissions strategy.

In his correspondence to you, Mr Cheesewright references a Private Members' Bill. I have been informed that the Bill is currently proceeding through the House of Lords and will of course receive the appropriate Parliamentary scrutiny.

Please extend my gratitude to Mr Cheesewright for taking the time to write in with his concerns.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'RM', followed by a period.

RACHEL MACLEAN

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT