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## Green vs blue

**G**overnment environmental targets are moving fleets away from diesel- and petrol-based powertrains, with all new car and van sales effectively banned by 2030. Hybrid technology vehicles will be banned from 2035. This means that emergency fleets have 10 years to find, test and introduce a zero-emission variant.

These requirements pose challenges for blue-light emergency services, where vehicles must be robust enough to withstand arduous duty, have the reliability to complete upwards of 30,000 annual miles and provide a resilient power supply for emergency warning lights and equipment. Police conversions tend to make vehicles operate close to their maximum design weights, so any alternative powertrains are constrained by weight.

In previous years, police vehicles have been specified through The National Association of Police Fleet Managers (NAPFM). The previous procurement contract expired in 2019 and due to the COVID-19 situation the new contract won't start until April 2021.

Virus or not, fleets continue to age, so replacements are constantly required. Having researched technologies and vehicle conversion requirements, Merseyside Police's first sustainable part-electric vehicle is a 48V mild hybrid with diesel powertrain. A fleet of 12 Kia Sportage SUVs were put through their paces on a trial basis and following commission entered service in October. The hope is that electric vehicles will reduce overall maintenance costs compared to diesel variants, while having the added benefit of being environmentally-friendly.

Our in-house technicians have just completed manufacturer training to learn the 48V electric systems.

As with any vehicle pilot, you need to monitor the vehicles through their operating life. There is always a risk in making a choice, and it's the same for commercial vehicle fleets. Starting with a small trial allows us to fully evaluate performance and any risks that they pose. Whether those risks are operational, financial or maintenance-based remains to be seen.



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