THE DRIVERLESS CAR; DRIVER CONSULTATION

On 11 July the (UK) Department for Transport invited car drivers to have their say on the use of advanced driver assistance systems and self-driving technologies in cars on British roads.

At the same time the following were announced:

- A programme of reform to make the roads ready for advanced driver assistance and driverless technology was launched.

- A consultation with a chance for everyone to have their say about new vehicle technologies was offered.

In summary, a major consultation to help pave the way for automated cars to be used on British roads was launched, with all drivers invited to have their say.

Under the proposed measures, rules will be changed so automated vehicles can be insured for use on the roads.

In addition, the Highway Code and regulations are to be altered so advanced driver assistance systems that change lanes on the motorway and park the vehicle by remote control can be used safely.

Separately, the government will, in August, launch a competition for a further £30 million from the Intelligent Mobility Fund, for research and development of innovative connected and autonomous vehicle technologies.

This builds on the first £20 million awarded to a number of projects in February, and ensures the UK is able to take advantage of the latest technological developments in driverless cars research.

An additional £19 million fund is also paving the way for driverless car projects in Greenwich, Bristol, and a joint project in Milton Keynes and Coventry.

The government is determined that Britain leads the way globally in embracing the safe development of driverless technology.

The then Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin said: ‘Driverless car technology will revolutionise the way we travel and deliver better journeys. Britain is leading the way but I want everyone to have the chance to have a say on how we embrace and use these technologies. Our roads are already some of
Business Secretary at the time, Sajid Javid added: ‘Britain’s auto industry has always been at the forefront of innovation and research. This additional £30 million of funding for research and development (R&D) is a further sign of our commitment to making sure we are creating opportunities for UK businesses to thrive and attract global investment in world-class technology.’

Cars with advanced driver assistance features, such as remote control parking and motorway assist, are expected to be on sale in Britain in the next two to four years with automated and driverless vehicles expected on the roads any time from the mid-2020s onwards.

Consultation on the two changes got underway on 11 July and will last for nine weeks as the start of a rolling programme of reform on the way to fully automated vehicles.

Under the proposals:

- The Highway Code and regulations will be changed to support the safe use of remote control parking and motorway assist features
- Insurance law will be changed so that, in the future, motorists who have handed control to their self-driving cars can be insured properly

The proposed changes to insurance will be brought forward in the Modern Transport Bill. Motor insurance will remain compulsory but will be extended to cover product liability for automated vehicles.

When a motorist has handed control to their vehicle, they can be reassured that their insurance will be there if anything goes wrong.

James Dalton, Director of General Insurance Policy at the Association of British Insurers (ABI), said: ‘The ABI’s Automated Driving Insurer Group has been engaged in constructive and productive discussions with the DfT for many months now so it is good to see the importance of insurance to the vehicles of the future recognised within this consultation. The development of automated driving will revolutionise motoring, potentially as important a road safety innovation as the seatbelt. Insurers strongly support the Government’s ambition of making the UK a world leader in this technology and believe the insurance industry has a key role in helping give consumers confidence in using these vehicles when they become more widely available.’
It is understood that the driver’s insurer will still pay out in the normal way so road accident victims are promptly reimbursed – but the insurer will then be able to claim the money back from the car company if the vehicle is deemed to be at fault.

Picture caption

*Driverless car.*

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