

Britain offers state grants for electric cars

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Transport Secretary Philip Hammond said nine different electric car models would be eligible for a grant of up to 5,000 pounds (5,900 euros, 7,930 dollars), while the government would increase the number of charging points.

Industry bodies welcomed the subsidies but acknowledged that with [electric cars](#) costing more than 30,000 pounds -- in some cases a lot more than petrol or diesel models -- it may be some time before the

scheme becomes widely popular.

"Government action to support affordable vehicles and more local charging points means we are on the threshold of an exciting [green revolution](#)," Hammond said in a statement.

"2011 could be remembered as the year the electric car took off," he added.

From January, drivers who buy the Mitsubishi iMiEV, the Mercedes-Benz smart Fortwo ED or the Peugeot iON can get the grants.

They will also be rolled out next year on the Citroen CZero, the Nissan Leaf and the Tata Vista EV as these models are launched on the market.

From early 2012, British motorists will be able to get the discount on Toyota's Prius Plug-in car, the Vauxhall Ampera and Chevrolet's Volt model.

Stephen Glaister of the RAC Foundation, an independent research body for the car industry, said that while a grant "makes ultra-green cars cheaper, it doesn't make them cheap."

He added: "The 43 million pounds being made available until early 2012 means at least 8,600 will benefit from the subsidy, though this has to be put into the context of the 28 million cars in the UK and annual new car sales of around two million.

"Clearly we are still a long way from an affordable mass market for these vehicles but this is a very welcome step in the right direction."

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