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## **Hybrid....a plant, an animal or a car?**

Fifty per cent of motorists have never heard of a hybrid car, according to new research\* to be published today.

This comes on the launch day of a new hybrid Honda Civic and the publication of Government's UK Climate Change Programme 2006. The RAC Foundation claims greater encouragement of technological solutions such as hybrid and fuel cell vehicles and an education programme to encourage eco-driving would be an effective way of cutting road transport carbon dioxide emissions.

According to the Foundation current hybrid myths include:

- Most people think of a hybrid as "an off-spring of two animals or plants of different species" rather than a car with a combination of a petrol engine with an electric motor.
- People probably still think hybrids have to be plugged in as 70 per cent admitted they don't know how a hybrid works.
- Many people don't realise that the driver does not have to switch between petrol and electric.
- Many people think hybrids are only for "tree huggers".

The reality is that a good hybrid car feels and performs just like any decent car. The electric motor assists the engine by giving it a boost during acceleration to improve fuel economy. It runs the car at idle so it is quiet and has reduced emissions when stuck in traffic. The battery even charges itself up with regenerative energy from deceleration and braking.

On the day of the publication of the Government's Climate Change Review the RAC Foundation is calling for more to be done to close the motorists' "attitude-action gap"\*\*. Motorists have a concern for the environment and the environmental impact of cars but this does not translate into behavioural change. One of the reasons for this, according to the Foundation, is a lack of knowledge or understanding of some of the technological fixes such as hybrid vehicles.

The RAC Foundation in its report "Motoring towards 2050" argues that the hybrid car could be stepping stone to the zero emissions hydrogen fuel cell vehicle and therefore more should be done to encourage the take-up of hybrids. The Foundation welcomed the reduced tax discs for cleaner vehicles announced in the Budget but still believes greater incentives are required.



Possible solutions floated in the Government's Climate Change Review have included:

- A crackdown on motorists who speed on motorways
- Increase car sharing (Government has announced HOV lanes)
- Investment in public transport
- Cutting back on the school run
- Inclusion of road transport in EU Emissions Trading Scheme
- Introduction of road pricing
- Biofuels encouraged under Renewable Transport Fuels Obligation (announced)
- Reform of VED (announced at budget)

The RAC Foundation believes that a dual approach to reduced road emissions is required. This would involve:

- Greater encouragement and longer-term incentives for the development and take-up of technological solutions such as hybrid and fuel cell vehicles.
- An education and communication programme to encourage eco-driving.

At the new Honda Civic Hybrid launch, Edmund King, executive director of the RAC Foundation will say:

" We need to show people that hybrids are not freak animals or plants but important technological innovative cars for the present and future. Our motoring vision of the future does not include Dan Dare and the Jetsons in their flying cars but it does involve technologically advanced hybrid cars as a longer term stepping stone to the zero emissions hydrogen fuel cell car.

"Climate change is an urgent issue. Our report "Motoring Towards 2050" shows optimism for the future but the future must start here and now.

"We need to close the attitude-action gap by encouraging motorists to opt for cleaner, greener cars and adapt our driving styles to radically reduce pollution. The combination of technology and driving style will do more to instigate change than Government dictates."

Notes:

- \* Survey from Honda (UK) details to be released at hybrid launch
- \*\*Research taken from "Car buyer user report" for the LowCVP written by Ben Lane
- The Honda Civic Hybrid launch takes place at 10.30 am on 28.3.06 at The Imagination Gallery London WC1E 7Bl