

“Our priority is to lead a green energy revolution by maximising the use of renewable energy, and minimising transport emissions.”



The future IS Lexus hybrid

Making a decision based on what we have chosen in the past is no way to think clearly about our mobility for the future, says Richard Webb.

Our brains are remarkably powerful, but they are also programmed to take short-cuts. This can lead to what psychologists term ‘cognitive errors’. In his book *The Art of Thinking Clearly*, Rolf Dobelli speaks of ‘confirmation bias’ – which is our tendency to seek out and interpret information in a way that is compatible with our existing theories, beliefs, and convictions. In other words, we filter out any information that contradicts our existing views.

As an automotive influencer, I’m not supposed to fall for that old chestnut, yet sometimes I do. My appreciation for the high-revving petrol or a grumpy diesel engine has held some serious sway over Electric Vehicles (EV’s) or Hybrids – until now. I now see that hybrid power offers some attractive benefits and is well worth a look if you are considering buying a new car and are concerned about the environment.

MK Sustainable Strategy

Mindful of this, I spoke with Councillor Peter Marland – the Leader of Milton Keynes Council – about the recently announced MK Sustainability Strategy 2019-2050. The council has a long-term vision to help tackle the global challenges of climate change within a local context. “Milton Keynes is ‘Different by Design’ and has always faced challenges with new projects. We were the first UK city to have kerbside recycling in 1989 and the first to offer public electric vehicles charging points in 2010,” says Marland.

Milton Keynes is actively striving towards being carbon neutral by 2030 and carbon negative by 2050, all while creating one of the world’s most truly sustainable economies and models for growth.

Electric and hybrid motoring is a key component in helping to minimize emissions, but it is still an emerging technology. Whether it’s a plug-in electric vehicle (PHEV) or the Lexus style of hybrid (Lexus seem to have cracked the formula for a fully ‘self-charging’ non-plug-in hybrid) – that regenerates its own energy.

The concept of the hybrid car – a petrol engine mated to an electric motor and battery pack – was first put into mass production by Lexus’ parent, Toyota, with its Prius. The rise in other hybrid models has been largely driven by emissions legislation and an understanding that future emissions limits will no longer be able to be met by petrol or diesel engines alone. Some form of electrical assistance will be required.

Benefits of hybrid

Self-charging hybrids are a good choice if you don’t have off-street parking that allows you to plug in a PHEV. Self-Charging Hybrid vehicles charge themselves as you drive. Its ability to shut down its engine and rely on the electric motor at low speeds makes it far more efficient in traffic than a typical diesel.

Making a decision based solely on how we chose or responded in the past is not always the best way to think about our mobility and environment in the future. I drove the Lexus NX300h – a mid-size SUV which has been around since 2014. This utterly reliable SUV has been facelifted, with a tweaked front bumper, new alloy wheels and as always there is that unmissable spindle grille. The car does have worthy competitors, like the BMW X3 or Audi Q5 but you’ll have to wait till later this year for them to offer a requisite hybrid system.

All NXs feature the same hybrid system, which seamlessly fuses a four-cylinder 2.5-litre petrol engine with a powerful electric motor. It really is silky-smooth and pleasantly refined at low speeds and under modest acceleration you wonder how it can be so whisper quiet. All but the entry-level cars are four wheel-drive.



Make no mistake this is a heavy car, but it still manages a real sense of precision and body control. Add in the comfy seats and sense of calm and quality to the interior and you come away convinced that they are class leaders in this space.

To get a better sense of how this technology translates in to a sporting two-plus-two sports coupé, I also drove the LC 500h, which uses a unique Multi Stage Hybrid system and a 10-speed gearbox for exhilarating performance. Take one howling 3.5-litre V6 and combine it with an epicyclic-based hybrid system and you get a sonorous, well-engineered beauty.

Impressive mpg’s

Gentle acceleration from a rest starts with electric mode but rouse the LC 500h with a stomp and you unleash the capabilities of a 155mph top end and a 4.7sec 0-62mph. It also managed to return an impressive 44.1mpg in EU fuel economy tests – which is truly brilliant for a car with such searing

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performance. It’s no wonder half of UK buyers choose the hybrid over its a 5-litre V8 engine sibling, which manages only 24.6mpg. I do believe that this visually exciting Lexus added to the hybrid technology where you do not even need a plug and the overall benefits are very clear. Few cars have challenged my confirmation bias like this car. A desire to always be looking for new ways to craft the future with a healthy love and appreciation for innovation could be why Lexus has the largest range of hybrid vehicles of any luxury manufacturer.

Follow Richard Webb on instagram. [com/richardmarkwebb](https://www.instagram.com/richardmarkwebb)

