

Collision course – Which car?

Meeting briefing

The UK public has become very dependent on cars as a means of transport. There are nearly half as many cars in the country (about 31 million) as there are people (about 66 million). As fossil fuels decline in supply, government needs to take a decision about the kind of car to recommend to the UK public for the first half of the 21st century.

In this role play exercise, you will participate in a meeting led by the government's Minister for Transport to decide which of three types of car

petrol, hydrogen or petrol-battery (hybrid) powered

should be recommended for purchase as the main type of car available in the UK over the next 20-30 years. The Minister has to decide whether to stay with petrol cars, or whether one of the other options should become the UK's main type of car.

The meeting will involve hearing presentations from:

- manufacturers of cars powered by petrol, hydrogen and petrol-battery (hybrid)
- experts on low carbon technology (LCT)
- a representative of the Fuel Suppliers Association
- a car industry expert.

Journalists from the national newspapers and relevant magazines are also invited to the meeting and to ask questions.

Preparation for the meeting

You will work in a team preparing one of these roles.

Car industry expert

The car industry expert must provide an unbiased 'overview' of the UK car market. The expert must know about all three types of car being presented and make a recommendation to government about the best type to be offered for sale.

As a starting point, research information about:

- emission levels from the car types
- the numbers of cars sold in the UK each year
- the prices of the three car types
- the possible effects on ordinary families of buying either of the two 'alternative' car types
- UK attitudes to cars and to taking on new types of cars and new technology.

You will have 5-10 minutes to make your presentation at the meeting.

Write a summary of your arguments in 200-300 words to brief the Minister and the journalists.

Have this available in the meeting.

Representative of the petrol powered car manufacturers**Representative of the hydrogen powered car manufacturers****Representative of the petrol-battery (hybrid) powered car manufacturers**

Each car manufacturer must attempt to persuade the government to adopt their type of car for the UK market. Obviously, a lot of money and jobs could be at stake. In your presentation, you are advised to include:

- a picture of the car
- how the engine works
- information about the fuel type, consumption, and emissions
- how much it costs
- the advantages of your car type over the others.

You will have 5-10 minutes to make your case in the meeting.

Write a summary of your arguments in 200-300 words to brief the Minister and the journalists.

Have this available in the meeting.

Representative of the Carbon Trust - expert in low carbon technology (LCT)

As experts in low carbon technology, the Carbon Trust team are biased in favour of hydrogen power or hybrid cars. This is because these use less carbon-based fuels (none at all in the case of cars powered by hydrogen) and use technology that reduces the emission of greenhouse gases. Using LCT at an early stage means that fossil fuel supplies can be made to last longer.

The team's presentation to government must assume that the Minister does not know anything about LCT. The presentation should therefore include:

- a description of LCT
- why LCT is important for the UK
- facts and figures showing what LCT can contribute to the UK economy and environment
- what might happen if LCT is not adopted in cars at the earliest opportunity.

You will have 5-10 minutes to make your case in the meeting.

Write a summary of your arguments in 200-300 words to brief the Minister and the journalists.

Have this available in the meeting.

Representative of the Fuel Suppliers Association (FSA)

At this stage, the FSA team is biased in favour of retaining petrol cars as the main car type. This is because change to hydrogen or battery-powered cars is seen as very costly and may cause job losses among fuel suppliers as garages change their nature and become fewer in number.

The FSA should present to the Minister:

- facts and figures about the fuel supply industry as it is at present
- an estimate of costs related to changing to hydrogen and to hybrid cars
- the ease and cost effectiveness with which petrol supplies are maintained
- the disadvantages of hydrogen and battery-recharging stations compared with petrol stations
- reasons for waiting another 10 years before changes are made.

You will have 5-10 minutes to make your case in the meeting.

Write a summary of your arguments in 200-300 words to brief the Minister and the journalists.

Have this available in the meeting.

Minister for Transport

The Ministerial team is responsible for making a decision about which car type should become the 'industry standard' for the UK market over the next 20-30 years. The decision is necessary because of the decline in supply and rising costs of fossil fuels. However, the decision is not clear cut. The Minister has called the meeting to hear the views of all sides involved. At the end of the meeting, the Minister will make a recommendation about the car type based on the presentations made at the meeting.

In preparation for the meeting, the Ministerial team must:

- research information about the three types of car (petrol, hydrogen and petrol-battery hybrid), to ensure that the presentations will be understood
- prepare questions for the representatives to clarify their arguments
- prepare a running order of the presentations to ensure everyone is heard fairly
- find out about how government decisions are made.

After the meeting you must prepare a written summary in about 200-300 words making clear the reasons for your decision.

Journalists

Your newspaper or magazine wants to report on the meeting and its outcome. You know that this is a very important decision that will impact on your readers.

Before the meeting:

- prepare questions to ask each presenter
- research the arguments each side may come up with, so you are informed.

During the meeting make sure that your questions are put to the presenters.

Read the briefings prepared for you by the presentation teams.

After the meeting, write a report of 200-300 words summarising the discussion for your readers. Your readers will want to know the reasons why the Minister made his/her decision and how this will affect them.