

TRUTH VS PROPAGANDA

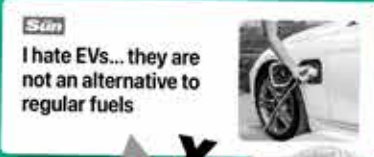
MEET THE EV LIE-BUSTERS AND THE 10 BIGGEST MYTHS THEY'RE BATTLING

They blow up, can't be recycled and crush car parks: #StopBurningStuff reveals the top 10 EV lies

Words Phil McNamara



Sun
My mum bought an EV - it made me realise how much I don't want one



Sun
I hate EVs... they are not an alternative to regular fuels



Sun
Urgent driver warning over EV parking rules that could cost you HUNDREDS



Sun
I'm a Tesla owner... here's four things I hate about my Model X

Sun
Our posh village is being ruined by roadworks to install EV chargers

Sun
We ditched petrol for EVs... now we're being punished - they're impossible to run

Sun
I bought a Tesla but nobody told me about a constant problem



A lie will go all around the world while the truth is still pulling its boots on,' says Dan Caesar, the CEO of sustainability YouTube channel Fully Charged Show. 'The myth that the carbon debt embedded in an EV takes 48,000 miles to pay back is surfacing now in America and has been used in the Senate.'

The politically stoked culture wars are well and truly engulfing the electric car. Campaigning at a Michigan automotive parts plant in September, former President Donald Trump claimed 'EVs are bad...for the environment' and can only 'drive for 15 minutes before you have to get a charge.'

Around the same time, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak delayed the UK's ban on new combustion-engine cars from 2030 to 2035, seemingly because he thinks siding with motorists who perceive EVs to be costlier to own is a vote-winner.

These are prominent examples, but in the post-truth society misinformation is everywhere and can influence everyone. Caesar recounts recent debates with a taxi driver and Amsterdam policeman swayed by anti-EV propaganda.

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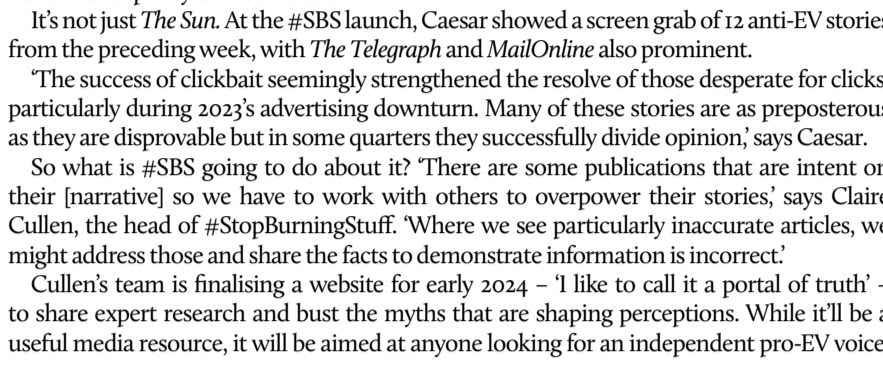
Llewellyn (left) and Willson vs misinformation

So along with actor Robert Llewellyn – the face of Fully Charged – and former *Top Gear* TV presenter Quentin Willson, Caesar has launched #StopBurningStuff, a campaign to combat misinformation about EVs. Or #StopBS to use Llewellyn's pointed abbreviation.

Speaking at the London launch, Llewellyn railed against the 'incredible ramp-up of misinformation and weird stories [about EVs]: car parks and bridges collapsing, explosions and fires reported in newspapers and online.'

'This is destabilising the energy transition and electric vehicles sales,' adds Willson, who is CEO of Fair Charge, which campaigns on EV issues such as cutting VAT on public charging. 'We are here to push back and it's so important we get heard among all that white noise.'

The trio has the news media in its cross-hairs. Google *The Sun's* electric vehicle coverage and you'll open a Pandora's box of negativity, with stories often based on a single, unauthoritative social media source. We put this to *The Sun* which responded: 'We are a consumer brand which takes into account our readers' needs including the cost of living crisis, budgets, electric car infrastructure difficulties. Our articles are fair and balanced and take



Much less handy with the Super Glue than Just Stop Oil

into account different views and opinions rather than just promoting. Many of those you [reference] are opinions of some of our writers but this shouldn't be taken as a reflection of our editorial policy on electric cars.'

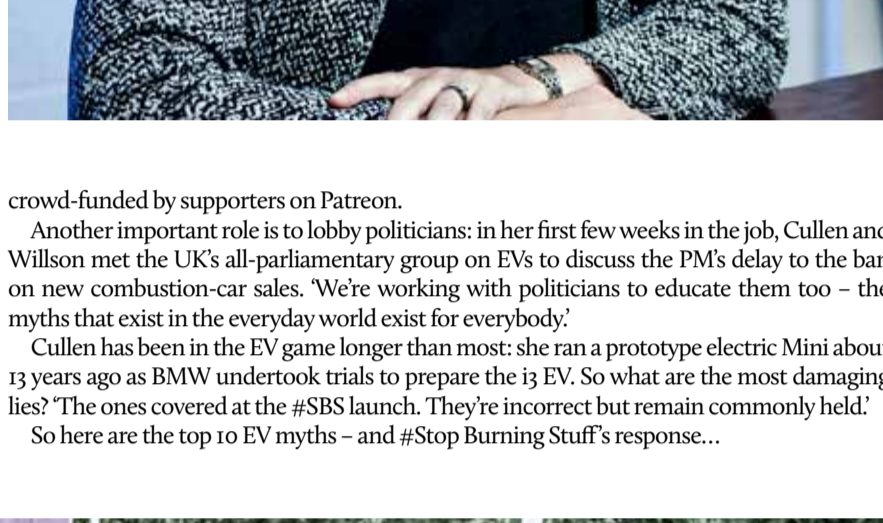
It's not just *The Sun*. At the #SBS launch, Caesar showed a screen grab of 12 anti-EV stories from the preceding week, with *The Telegraph* and *MailOnline* also prominent.

'The success of clickbait seemingly strengthened the resolve of those desperate for clicks, particularly during 2023's advertising downturn. Many of these stories are as preposterous as they are disprovable but in some quarters they successfully divide opinion,' says Caesar.

So what is #SBS going to do about it? 'There are some publications that are intent on their [narrative] so we have to work with others to overpower their stories,' says Claire Cullen, the head of #StopBurningStuff. 'Where we see particularly inaccurate articles, we might address those and share the facts to demonstrate information is incorrect.'

Cullen's team is finalising a website for early 2024 – 'I like to call it a portal of truth' – to share expert research and bust the myths that are shaping perceptions. While it'll be a useful media resource, it will be aimed at anyone looking for an independent pro-EV voice,

Google The Sun's EV stories and you'll open a Pandora's box of negativity



crowd-funded by supporters on Patreon.

Another important role is to lobby politicians: in her first few weeks in the job, Cullen and Willson met the UK's all-parliamentary group on EVs to discuss the PMs delay to the ban on new combustion-car sales. 'We're working with politicians to educate them too – the myths that exist in the everyday world exist for everybody.'

Cullen has been in the EV game longer than most: she ran a prototype electric Mini about 13 years ago as BMW undertook trials to prepare the i3 EV. So what are the most damaging lies? 'The ones covered at the #SBS launch. They're incorrect but remain commonly held.'

So here are the top 10 EV myths – and #Stop Burning Stuff's response...



1

ARE EVs REALLY CLEAN?

'The idea that a combustion car could be more green than an EV is bizarrely embedded in the internet,' fumes Quentin Willson. It's widely known that manufacturing a combustion car is less carbon-intensive than making an EV, though the latter's carbon footprint is declining as more green energy powers assembly plants and car makers reduce rare earths in batteries and electric motors. 'An EV's carbon debt takes a year and up to 17,000 miles to pay back, depending on the charging grid and how it's driven,' explains Willson. 'After that it's in the media in huge credit as there are no emissions.'

2

COBALT MINING IS UNETHICAL

The #SBS spokespeople are nunced on cobalt mining, referencing child slavery in cobalt mines in the Democratic Republic of Congo and human-rights abuses in unregulated Chinese mines. 'But major manufacturers [including Tesla] have signed up to the Fair Cobalt Alliance, which aims to put children in schools not mines, and the amount of cobalt in batteries is down 90 per cent since 2011. And in the interest of balance, cobalt is used as a catalyst in refining crude oil,' points out Robert Llewellyn.



3

EV BATTERIES AREN'T RECYCLABLE

Car manufacturers such as VW have shown the media around their battery recycling facilities, and some early Nissan Leaf batteries now have a second life powering the Amsterdam Arena. A battery recycling industry is emerging, with US player Ecobat establishing a UK operation to recycle lithium-ion cells: since 2021 it has processed 6000 EV batteries. Electrochemist Euan McTurk reckons growing demand means it's financially viable to extend cobalt and copper reuse into lithium-ion phosphate, as the industry chases a virtuous circle; Renault says its new Scenic e-Tech's battery is 90 per cent recyclable.



The anti-EV faction overlook that highly flammable fuel is essential to combustion engines

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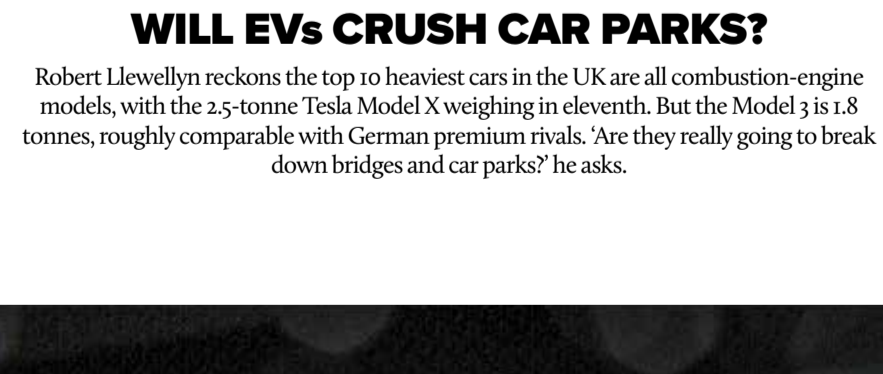
DO BATTERIES BLOW UP?

Social-media conspiracy theorists jumped to the conclusion that an EV caused October's Luton Airport car-park conflagration; the fire brigade confirmed a diesel sparked it. The anti-EV faction conveniently overlook that highly flammable fuel is essential to combustion engines; Quentin Willson claims EVs are 19 times less likely to catch fire. One vivid moment of the #SBS launch saw representatives of big fleet providers Lex Autolease/Black Horse (165,000 EVs) and Tusker Direct (23,000 EVs) both solemnly declare none of their electric vehicles had ever self-immolated.

5

EVs EAT THROUGH TYRES AND BRAKES

Similarly the lived experience of the Tusker and Lex fleets shows that combustion and electric cars consume tyres at an equal rate. Researcher Euan McTurk investigated this for an RAC study and dismissed EVs as being harder on tyres as 'certifiable nonsense...[unless] you always drive like you stole it!' And given that EVs' electric motors enable regenerative braking, the friction brakes are subjected to less wear and tear and should last longer.



6

CAN THE UK'S NATIONAL GRID COPE?

'Anyone who says the grid won't be able to cope with the energy transition is expecting us not to build anything again,' says Lorna McAtear, the National Grid's head of fleet. 'We'll put in five more onshore wind farms in the next seven years than the last 30 years, and connection requests are predicted to climb from 165 to 2000 per day.' The advent of low-consumption LED light bulbs has given the grid more headroom, and in the next few years bi-directional charging (from electric cars and other storage solutions) will feed energy back into the grid on demand. All good. But it's well known that the grid is struggling to keep pace with demand for new connections, and is having to reorganise to ease bottlenecks in connecting new public chargers, for example.

7

CAN YOU CHARGE ON THE ROAD?

At the end of October, Zapmap calculated the UK had 51516 chargers at 30,000 locations: one-sixth of the government's 2030 target of 300,000 chargers. 'I think that's a figure [former Prime Minister] Boris Johnson plucked out of the air and it's a challenge,' says Quentin Willson. But the existing charger utilisation rate is about 15 per cent, and EV-sceptics often on long journeys can still be a lottery, as CAR's Truth About Motorway Charging investigated. But ask yourself how often will you drive an EV hundreds of miles?

8

WILL EVs CRUSH CAR PARKS?

Robert Llewellyn reckons the top 10 heaviest cars in the UK are all combustion-engine models, with the 2.5-tonne Tesla Model X weighing in eleventh. But the Model 3 is 1.8 tonnes, roughly comparable with German premium rivals. 'Are they really going to break down bridges and car parks?' he asks.

Charging on long journeys can be a lottery – but how often will you drive an EV hundreds of miles?

9

WINTER HAMMERS EV RANGE

'On average EVs have about a 20 per cent loss of battery efficiency in cold weather,' claims Quentin Willson. 'But the American Department of Energy website [states] about 15 per cent is lost in a gas car in wintry weather. So EVs are pretty similar to petrol cars but that question is typically never asked.' Again CAR has put this to the test: in 'EVs vs Winter' (February 2023) we recorded an average 33 per cent shortfall against nine EVs' official ranges, in a tough test mixing bitter weather and lots of motorway and fast B-road driving.

10

EVs ARE UNAFFORDABLE

Electric cars are yet to hit price parity with petrol cars, though there are a few cheaper Chinese EVs and 2024 will bring the £23k Citroën e-C3 (below) and £18k Dacia Spring. They're still too expensive, it's an average £10k difference, says Quentin Willson. 'But why think about that large capital sum when the total cost of ownership is significantly less than a combustion car? [Fleet operator] Tusker calculates 31 per cent lower maintenance costs across your life cycle plus [cheaper] fuel. But that [acquisition] figure is getting in the way,' he admits.

