

A manifesto for fairer and safer streets

Prepared by
the SUV Alliance.

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Large Sports Utility Vehicles (SUVs) and 4x4s are more polluting, more expensive and more dangerous to other road users, yet they are fast becoming the norm in the UK. Pushed by carmakers and their advertisers, who get higher profits from bigger cars, and facilitated by a lack of action from governments, bigger, heavier cars are taking over our streets, holding back the market for smaller, affordable electric vehicles, and reducing street space for other transport modes.

But there is an alternative. A few simple changes now would ensure that large, polluting, dangerous SUVs are no longer welcome on our streets, and would create space for accessible and affordable public transport, active travel and small electric vehicles. **This is the vision of safer and fairer streets we want to see.**

Below we have set out recommendations for policymakers to **change course on the acceleration to ever bigger, heavier and more dangerous SUVs and 4x4s.**

Our 5 Asks

- 1** Reform Vehicle Excise Duty to introduce a progressively higher tax on the most polluting vehicles proportional to the vehicle's weight.*
- 2** Set maximum width, length and height limits for new car sales from 2030 so that carmakers cannot continue to sell passenger vehicles that are too big for parking spaces.*
- 3** Follow the lead of Edinburgh City Council and The Hague to introduce a national tobacco-style ban on SUV advertising – including hybrid, plug-in hybrid and electric SUVs – in outdoor advertising spaces like billboards and bus stops.
- 4** Mandate that carmakers must publish an “eco-score” for all new electric vehicles, combining engine efficiency with the carbon footprint at the vehicle's production stage including the battery, steel and aluminium.
- 5** Empower and encourage more local authorities to introduce progressive parking tariffs on heavier, bigger and more polluting passenger vehicles.

*with exemptions for adapted vehicles



Why these Asks?

Ask 1 Rationale

First year Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) is the tax paid upon purchase of a new car. The UK's system is based on the tailpipe CO2 emissions of the car. The UK currently taxes polluting cars comparatively low to other European countries at the point of purchase, particularly for the highest polluting models. Meanwhile, the UK does not tax on the basis of weight or size of the car.

A progressive first year VED system that accounts for weight or size of a car as well as tailpipe CO2 emissions, would mean that the tax is higher for larger, more polluting new cars and lower for smaller battery electric cars, thus recognising the greater environmental, safety and health costs borne by society from increasing large cars on the roads. Adding a weight element to first year VED would also help to “future proof” VED as tax receipts from new petrol and diesel sales dwindle over the next 11 years before the end date for sales of non-zero emission cars.

Ask 2 Rationale

UK law currently allows for passenger vehicles to exceed the size of a parking bay. Among the bestselling 100 vehicle models sold in 2023, 52% were too wide for the minimum specified on-street parking space (180 cm) in major cities leading to parking stress, increased pavement parking, and reduced road space for all users.

Setting mandated design limits for passenger vehicle sizes (which could also include bonnet height) would also improve safety for other road users, particularly for people walking, wheeling, cycling and scooting. Raised, flat bonnets are a major contributor to the threat SUVs pose to other road users.

Ask 3 Rationale

Advertising is a powerful driver of demand for larger SUVs and 4x4s. Evidence from Australia demonstrates spend on SUV advertising increased before demand, suggesting demand is a product of supply, rather than the other way round. The presence of SUV adverts on the streets, such as in bus stop ad panels, reinforces the narrative that “car is king” and incentivizes greater private vehicle use whilst undermining choices for less polluting alternatives like public transport and active travel.

At present, local councils are limited to controlling outdoor adverts on sites they own, such as bus stops. A national tobacco-style ban on such advertising for SUVs would prohibit them from appearing anywhere on our streets.



Ask 4 Rationale

Following the work of the European Consumer Organisation (BEUC), Environmental Action Germany (DUH), the Mobility in Transition Institute (IMT), and Transport & Environment (T&E), an eco-score focuses on the most significant contributors to a vehicle's environmental impact, ensuring clarity and comparability for consumers and policymakers alike. The proposed score is based on two parameters:

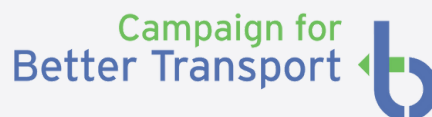
1. Vehicle energy efficiency (measured in kWh/km) to ensure that vehicles consume less energy per kilometre, reducing the overall demand on electricity grids and making them more cost-effective for consumers.
2. The carbon footprint of key components such as batteries, steel, and aluminium to minimise the carbon impact of manufacturing, and driving the industry towards cleaner materials and processes.

Ask 5 Rationale

The proportion of SUVs sold in the UK has increased 10 times in two decades, and such vehicles are themselves becoming wider and heavier. Many urban streets are simply too small to accommodate such large vehicles. Further, SUVs are a source of urban air pollution, often owned and driven by wealthier citizens at the expense of those in less wealthy areas. Efforts to disincentivise the use of SUVs in urban areas should be promoted to improve air quality, reduce congestion and reduce road danger.

In February 2024 the city of Paris voted to increase parking charges on the largest cars by as much as three times. In the UK, Bath and Islington councils have introduced parking charges based on emissions, with the most polluting cars paying a higher fee. The government can encourage other councils to replicate these efforts.

This manifesto has been developed by





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