Car maker Riversimple launches first UK trial of hydrogen cars
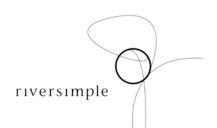
Welsh car company Riversimple has agreed the first trial of its hydrogen-powered cars in the UK.

Powys-based Riversimple is partnering with Monmouthshire County Council, to run a 12-month trial of the hydrogen-powered FCEV (fuel cell electric vehicle)'Rasa', which has a range of 300 miles, refills in five minutes and has "no cost premium" compared with a conventional car.

In early 2017, the 'disruptive technology' firm will supply 20 hand-built hydrogen cell cars for three or six-month contracts, to be driven by 60-80 residents in the county.

It marks the start of the company's ambitious plans to kick-start hydrogen infrastructure in the UK by developing a community of users around a single hydrogen refuelling station. As part of the initiative, a self-service, mobile refuelling point is planned for the council car parks at Abergavenny or Monmouth.

Over the next 20 years, Riversimple plans to build a distributed network of compact and efficient manufacturing plants that will regenerate communities and create thousands of jobs.

Company founder Hugo Spowers said: "As a Welsh company, we are excited to launch the first UK trial in Wales. The Monmouth and Riversimple partnership can bring a momentous change in the way mobility is delivered in a sustainable way. This trial is a first for the UK and has global significance."

Monmouthshire's cabinet member for sustainability County Councillor Phi Hobson said: "Monmouthshire County Council is really pleased to take part in a trial for the next generation of clean cars. This is another step towards the county's sustainable future."

The short distances between towns in the county are described as "ideal" for testing the cars, which are designed for local non-motorway use, with a top speed of 60mph.

Riversimple will cover the running costs of the cars, the temporary building of an "experience centre" and provide customer relations.

At last month's London Motor Show, Spowers   unveiled two [new concept vehicles](), based on the car maker's acclaimed two-seater 'Rasa' – a light goods vehicle and a four-seater car – both styled by renowned auto designer Chris Reitz.

The designs form part of Riversimple's plans to revolutionise the motor industry by bringing affordable, cutting-edge technology to everyday road-users with a unique, all inclusive sale-of-service offering. This eliminates built-in obsolescence and flips sustainability from a cost into a competitive advantage.

The Welsh company launched the 'Rasa' this spring, and started crowdfunding in April to match a €2m EU grant. It also received £2 million from the Welsh Government in 2015. It plans commercially

available cars in 2018. The concept vehicles will be developed at a later stage, following initial roll out.

Riversimple's plans echo a global shift – the UK government predicts 1.3m hydrogen cars will be on the road by 2030 and McKinsey Global Institute estimates that the clean tech product market will reach £1 trillion by 2020.

The 'Rasa' is believed to be the most efficient car in the world designed for ordinary road-going use ($40gCO_2$/km well-to-wheel) and has no tailpipe emissions – just water. The car weighs just 580kg and is incredibly aerodynamic. Refuelling takes just three minutes with a 300 mile range.

The 'Rasa' has spent 15 years in development and was styled by Chris Reitz, who also designed the Fiat 500. The team who created the Rasa hail from F1, Aston Martin, Bentley, Rolls Royce plc and other aerospace companies.

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