



**PROTEAN**

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**2020's Golden Opportunity for the Environment**

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# 2020's Golden Opportunity for the Environment

View from our CEO  
Andrew Whitehead, CEO

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**5 June 2020 is World Environment Day, an opportunity to raise awareness and encourage action on issues relating to climate change. This year it seems particularly pertinent as the global pandemic, which forced the world into lockdown, has resulted in huge drops in CO emissions and air pollution levels and even seen wildlife venture into our towns and cities.**

Changes in climate throughout history have altered life on Earth, and it is no secret that the biggest drivers of climate change on our planet are fossil-fuel emissions. Thus we all have a part to play in helping to protect and preserve the environment by reducing our emissions because, surely, the alternative is untenable?

Poor air quality is Europe's largest environmental health hazard and, according to the World Health Organisation, 4.2 million deaths globally every year are a result of exposure to air pollution, much of it from fossil-fuel emissions. Yet, during the Covid-19 lockdown, a study by the University of East Anglia revealed that the UK's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions fell by 31% to their lowest level in almost a century, with global emissions levels down by 17% on April 7\*. Statistics released by the UK Government's Cabinet Office also showed that road travel was at its lowest since 1955, which is likely to reduce early deaths from lung and heart conditions, according to *The Guardian* newspaper\*\*.

National and city administrations have a great opportunity to reflect on their responsibility to reduce air pollution, with particular focus on transport which is the biggest emitter in cities. But a huge responsibility also sits with the transport providers, who need to offer customers an attractive alternative to internal combustion powered cars, and fast, so that the low levels of pollution we are witnessing right now become viable long-term.

The technology already exists to eliminate tailpipe emissions and help make electric vehicles (EVs) a more compelling proposition to motorists. 88% of those who switch to EVs say they will never return to ICE vehicles, according to a survey carried out by electric vehicle advocates, Fully Charged\*\*\*. In-wheel motors provide added flexibility in design and vehicle layout, the possibility of extended range and a host of other safety, dynamics and efficiency benefits which offer manufacturers an opportunity to differentiate their models in what will soon become a crowded EV market. Aside from zero tailpipe emissions, EVs deliver a range of other positive advantages including improvements to noise emissions and lower running costs for drivers.

A study carried out by academics from the Trier University of Applied Sciences makes a clear case that electric vehicles can achieve the lowest overall environmental impact, independently from the energy used to build or charge them\*\*\*\*. This must be encouraged by ambitious targets and stringent regulations, such as those announced by the French government, which tie an €8 billion Covid-19 recovery support package for the automotive industry to incentives for new electric vehicles and a scrappage scheme for higher polluting models. This move speaks volumes for the ambitions of the French Government and sends a clear message about the importance of moving towards more sustainable personal transport as the world climbs out of the Covid-19 crisis. Hopefully, other governments across the world follow suit and the industry can smoothly transition to electric cars so that something good for our planet can come of this pandemic.

## About the author

Andrew Whitehead has been Chief Executive Officer at Protean Electric since November 2019, after 10 years with the company as president and COO.



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## Sources:

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