

## The Future of Petrol Stations for Vintage Cars

Back in February I posted to the Austin Seven Facebook Group about the decision to bring forward the date when the sale of petrol and diesel cars would be banned. At that time it was to be 2035. Today's news is that the date is going to be brought even further forward to 2030.

My concern was not that we couldn't keep our Austin Sevens. There is no way that they would ban petrol cars, only the sale of them. Rather, my concern was that the inevitable fall in the number of petrol driven cars on the road, even before the date of the ban, would prompt a rapid reduction in the number of filling stations.

The response from a number of Austin Seven owners back in February was that 'it will never happen'. 'If it does happen it won't be for some time because electric cars don't have enough range'. 'If they improve, there will still be enough petrol cars on the road, so why worry'. And the usual accusation of scaremongering.

This misses the point. The companies that currently operate the infrastructure supplying the fuel for petrol driven cars will disappear, as a simple, economic response to a dwindling customer base. The average life of a modern car is currently eight years, and they have a greater range than an Austin Seven and can cope with petrol stations being further apart. Austin Sevens will be starved of fuel long before the decade is out.

As a very rough estimate, there are approaching a quarter of a million classic car owners in this country and they are a resourceful lot. But they need to see the problem before they can respond to it. If the market is no longer going to supply fuel, then classic car owners will need to set up their own infrastructure. It isn't difficult. They did it before over a century ago when cars first appeared. The old style petrol stations, run by enthusiasts like the used to be, could find their time has come - again.

The FBHVC seem to be concentrating on the issue of ethanol in petrol at the moment, and preserving availability of low ethanol fuels at filling stations. This will be irrelevant if there are no filling stations. We need to start talking about this now and become pro-active. If we wait until it is painfully obvious, it will be too late.

Is this something that can be put on the agenda at an Association meeting?

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