

The Fourth Generation Toyota Prius

by Ian Lynas

Little doubt that Toyota can be credited as the pioneer of hybrid power technology and the opening chapter was with the launch of the Prius, then it was a rather ordinary looking four door saloon, however it was to form the basis for a key element in further development of this major Japanese carmaker.

Today in the UK market hybrid technology rests not just with the Prius but with a number of other Toyota models and the forecast is that by 2020, 50% of all Toyotas sold in the UK will rely on hybrid power.



When the original model was launched, a four door saloon, CO2 emissions were not in the agenda, a very different story today and the latest Prius can achieve a figure of just 70g/km.

Now we have the fourth generation of the Prius and recently the opportunity came my way to get behind the wheel of this futuristic styled car and may I add it is the best in styling terms of hybrid cars that are currently on the market.

A key model for Toyota, since it was first launched 3.6 million has taken to the road and the U.K. is the most important market in Europe.

With ever growing sales it has become a key model and in its latest guise it has much more

needed on road presence, sharp angular lines which makes it stand out as I discovered as I drove through the streets of Valencia.

Built on a new GA-C platform which will be used for future Toyota models, this adoption results in savings in manufacture.

With the fourth generation model comes a sizeable leap forward, the body is 60% more rigid, and a lower centre of gravity and new suspension delivers high levels of comfort for driver and passengers.

Behind the wheel what impressed, the excellent forward vision and a cabin which is roomy and seating that has been enhanced over the previous model.

In fact the cabin is free of clutter and wide use of quality materials gives a premium feel to this car, I particularly approve of the wide use of soft touch materials.

Right at the heart of this new Toyota is the driving systems, a 1.8 litre petrol engine and the next generation signature hybrid drivetrain. This system has been set up to provide a natural, immediate response to any accelerator pedal input, with the right level of performance.

Very important, economy has been improved, and can be as low as 94.1mpg, this figure provided by the manufacturer.

The new hybrid system is a more compact



package, lighter and lower in cost, a clear reflection of advances in battery, electric motor and petrol engines.

The size of the battery has been reduced by 10% and can absorb 28% more energy in the same amount of time, therefore faster charging.



Speaking with a Toyota spokesperson, the really good news is that fuel economy over the previous model can be as much as 21% better. Now that is sweet music to most ears.

Behind the wheel I was taken right away by the overall smoothness of the new Prius and performance was more than adequate, worth noting that in EV mode you can drive at 60mph plus. I am not for one minute suggesting that this Toyota delivers sports car performance, I would best describe it as lively.

Earlier I did refer to the low emission figure that refers to a car on 15 inch wheels, 17 inch wheels are also offered as standard, fitting the smaller wheel delivers a price reduction of

£400.

With so much technology in terms of mobility, no surprise that the new Prius is the total technology package with the features re safety etc; now a part of the Toyota range and there is even more with new Prius, no fewer than 22 sensors to aid parking, and a host of safety features.

In relation to safety in bringing this new hybrid model to the market, 400 cars were crash tested.

One feature which I spotted, a phone charger, cordless, you simply rest it on a cradle, of course it all depend on the phone you possess.

Four grades are offered, two business and a top of the range Excel and it is likely to appeal to the private buyer. The top two have a sat nav system as standard.

A number of attractive finance options both for the business and private customer and there is the added bonus of lower service costs.

Prices start at £23,295 and rise to £27,450 and peace of mind is provided by a five year/100,000 mile warranty for this five door hatchback with a reasonable sized boot area, (361 litres).

The new Prius clearly displays the future, the way that we can expect cars from this global car manufacturer.

