# Uber and Wayve launch UK’s first public trial of autonomous vehicles in London



Uber's move to trial autonomous vehicle technology in the UK is a landmark development poised to alter urban transport significantly. On Tuesday, the ride-hailing giant announced a collaboration with Wayve, an automated driving technology firm, to conduct public-road trials of self-driving cars in London. This initiative, hailed as the first of its kind in the UK, reflects a broader ambition to integrate autonomous vehicles into European cities efficiently.

As the largest market for Uber's autonomous ambitions, the UK is strategically positioned to lead the charge in self-driving technology. According to statements made during the announcement, the collaboration could set a precedent for scaling autonomous vehicle deployment across Europe. "The lessons learnt from the UK will therefore be a major step forward in the development of L4 technology for deployment in cities around the world," a company spokesperson noted. This sentiment echoes the government's commitment to enhancing the autonomous vehicle landscape, with projections indicating the sector could inject £42 billion into the economy and create approximately 38,000 jobs by 2035.

Transport Secretary Heidi Alexander articulated the government's support for the project, which seeks to fast-track the introduction of driverless vehicles to spring 2026. This timeline is a significant acceleration from earlier estimates and underscores the UK’s desire to remain competitive with leaders in the sector, such as the US and China. Recent regulatory changes, including a new framework established under the Automated Vehicles Act, will guide these trials, ensuring that safety remains paramount.

Regulatory bodies have emphasised the importance of clarity in oversight, particularly as the industry grapples with safety concerns associated with self-driving technology. The UK government's approach not only aims to position the country as a front-runner in the autonomous vehicle market but also seeks to minimise risks by implementing a stringent legal framework. This framework includes a regulatory scheme to monitor the continuous safety of self-driving vehicles, addressing issues such as liability and user responsibility. Experts have noted that human error is a contributing factor in 88% of road collisions, suggesting that autonomous vehicles could significantly enhance road safety if deployed effectively.

Moreover, the investment landscape for autonomous technology in the UK is robust, with Wayve recently securing $1 billion from SoftBank in one of Europe's largest AI funding rounds. This investment, which also includes contributions from technology giants like Nvidia and Microsoft, positions Wayve to advance its Embodied AI platform, which enables vehicles to learn from their driving environments. Such advancements could expedite the rollout of self-driving technology, placing the UK well ahead of its competitors.

Underlying this initiative is a transformative vision that seeks to reshape how people move within urban environments. Autonomous vehicles hold the potential to improve accessibility for those unable to drive, enhance public transport efficiency, and tackle issues like congestion and emissions. As the UK prepares for the forthcoming trials, all eyes will be on how the integration of these technologies shapes the future of transport, promising increased convenience for millions of consumers while pursuing ambitious economic goals.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/motoring/motoring-news/uber-trials-new-rules-uk-31827484), [[4]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-laws-to-safely-roll-out-self-driving-vehicles-across-british-roads)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/motoring/motoring-news/uber-trials-new-rules-uk-31827484), [[2]](https://www.ft.com/content/4c9f4025-ec0b-4cdb-9ba5-1c3e77041487)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.ft.com/content/a5704e29-545c-45e6-b7e3-d0a8cda285c4), [[5]](https://lawcom.gov.uk/comprehensive-regulatory-framework-for-self-driving-vehicles-proposed-to-government/), [[6]](https://dft-newsroom.prgloo.com/news/self-driving-vehicles-set-to-be-on-roads-by-2026-as-automated-vehicles-act-becomes-law)
* Paragraph 4 – [[2]](https://www.ft.com/content/4c9f4025-ec0b-4cdb-9ba5-1c3e77041487), [[7]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/britain-moves-closer-to-a-self-driving-revolution)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/motoring/motoring-news/uber-trials-new-rules-uk-31827484> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/4c9f4025-ec0b-4cdb-9ba5-1c3e77041487> - The UK is set to begin commercial trials of fully driverless taxi services in spring 2026, a year ahead of schedule, in an effort to compete globally with the US and China in autonomous vehicle technology. Transport Secretary Heidi Alexander announced the initiative, projecting that the autonomous vehicle industry could add £42 billion to the UK economy and create 38,000 jobs by 2035. The trials, legalized under the UK Automated Vehicles Act and subject to local authority approval and safety compliance, will deploy limited numbers of robotaxis and self-driving bus-like services without human drivers. Uber and UK-based Wayve plan to collaborate to launch one of the first driverless taxi services in London, pending regulatory approval. The UK lags behind the US and China in driverless technology deployment, with Waymo operating wide-scale services in the US and Chinese firms like Pony.ai and Baidu running extensive pilot programs. Industry leaders emphasize the need for streamlined regulatory processes to prevent further delays and ensure the UK remains competitive in the autonomous transport sector.
3. <https://www.ft.com/content/a5704e29-545c-45e6-b7e3-d0a8cda285c4> - SoftBank is leading a substantial $1 billion investment in Wayve, a UK-based self-driving car start-up, marking the largest European artificial intelligence deal to date. This funding, with contributions from Nvidia and Microsoft, aims to facilitate the deployment of Wayve's autonomous driving systems in vehicles within the next few years. This significant deal not only underlines the UK's growing AI capabilities but also highlights the country's ambition to become a global leader in AI research and innovation. Wayve's AI system differentiates itself by enabling vehicles to learn while driving, eliminating the need for expensive mapping and laser sensors. This approach could allow more rapid and cost-effective deployment of self-driving cars compared to rivals like Alphabet's Waymo. The company is currently collaborating with several car manufacturers to integrate its technology. SoftBank's investment signals a strategic move by CEO Masayoshi Son to deepen the company's involvement in AI advancements. The deal resonates with Britain's strategic interests and promises to be a crucial step in the wider deployment of autonomous driving technology.
4. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-laws-to-safely-roll-out-self-driving-vehicles-across-british-roads> - New laws introduced into Parliament will put safety at the heart of the roll-out of self-driving vehicle technology and position the UK as world-leaders of this exciting £42 billion industry. The Automated Vehicles (AV) Bill will deliver one of the most comprehensive legal frameworks of its kind anywhere in the world for self-driving vehicles, with safety at its core. The new safety framework will ensure clear liability for the user, set the safety threshold for legal self-driving and establish an in-use regulatory scheme to monitor the ongoing safety of these vehicles. Self-driving vehicles could help reduce deaths and injuries from drink driving, speeding and driver tiredness, with 88% of road collisions having human error as a contributory factor. But before these vehicles are allowed on our roads, they will now have to meet or exceed rigorous new safety requirements, set out in law. The technology will also help make travel more convenient and accessible, improving the lives of millions of people who can not drive. They can be used to better connect rural communities, improving access to essential services and reducing isolation. They can make last-mile delivery and long-haul freight services more efficient, reduce congestion and they can provide on-demand transport services. This Bill will help cement the UK’s position as a global leader in this high tech and high growth industry, which could create up to 38,000 jobs.
5. <https://lawcom.gov.uk/comprehensive-regulatory-framework-for-self-driving-vehicles-proposed-to-government/> - The Law Commission of England and Wales and the Scottish Law Commission have announced landmark proposals that will seek to ensure the safety of self-driving vehicles via a comprehensive new legal framework. Hailed as “leading the way on the regulation of this technology” by Transport Minister Rachel Maclean, the Commissions propose a new approach to assigning responsibility. The proposals include: Implementing a new, start-to-finish self-driving vehicle safety assurance scheme that includes monitoring performance and software updates throughout the vehicle’s life; Clearly defining the responsibility of drivers, users and fleet owners according to the capabilities of self-driving technologies, ensuring that self-driving vehicles are only ever used in the way they are intended; Ensuring that manufacturers and technology developers recognise their role in guaranteeing the safety of the vehicle, while freeing the driver from responsibility when the self-driving mode is engaged. This would mean that the user-in-charge (a new concept to describe a former driver once the vehicle is driving itself) would not be criminally liable if an accident occurred whilst the self-driving mode is engaged. The proposals also take lessons from the aviation sector, advocating a ‘no blame culture’, that will increase the quality of safety assurance over time while applying regulatory sanctions where appropriate. This would be followed by a categorisation decision to establish whether the vehicle is self-driving for GB purposes, and how it can lawfully be used on our roads. The proposed new safety assurance scheme would include additional responsibilities and powers to ensure in-use safety. This will ensure that self-driving vehicles remain safe throughout their lifetime. The scheme will regulate to ensure safety in response to software updates, cybersecurity risks and even updates to maps.
6. <https://dft-newsroom.prgloo.com/news/self-driving-vehicles-set-to-be-on-roads-by-2026-as-automated-vehicles-act-becomes-law> - Self-driving vehicles could be on British roads by 2026, after the Government’s world-leading Automated Vehicles (AV) Act became law today. Announced in the King’s Speech, the AV Act enables advanced technology to safely drive vehicles on British roads. The new law puts Great Britain firmly at the forefront of self-driving technology regulation, unlocking the potential of an industry estimated to be worth up to £42 billion and creating 38,000 more skilled jobs by 2035. Road safety is at the heart of the legislation, with automated vehicles expected to improve road safety by reducing human error, which contributes to 88 per cent of road collisions. The law will require self-driving vehicles to achieve a level of safety at least as high as careful and competent human drivers, as well as meeting rigorous safety checks before being allowed onto roads.
7. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/britain-moves-closer-to-a-self-driving-revolution> - Changes to The Highway Code will help ensure the first wave of self-driving vehicles are used safely on UK roads. The government sets out changes to The Highway Code to ensure the first self-driving vehicles are introduced safely on UK roads. Changes clarify drivers’ responsibilities in self-driving vehicles, including when a driver must be ready to take back control. Future technology could improve and level up transport, easing congestion, cutting emissions and reducing collisions caused by human error. Drivers will be able to experience the full benefits of the first self-driving vehicles when they arrive, as government sets out how they should be driven safely on UK roads. The government has today confirmed planned changes to The Highway Code, responding to a public consultation, continuing to pave the way for safer, more efficient travel. The changes to the code will help ensure the first wave of technology will be used safely, explaining clearly that while travelling in self-driving mode, motorists must be ready to resume control in a timely way if they are prompted to – such as when they approach motorway exits. The plans also include a change to current regulation, allowing drivers to view content that is not related to driving on built-in display screens, while the self-driving vehicle is in control.