# Keir Starmer's response to US tariffs raises questions about support for car industry



In a stark response to the recent imposition of tariffs by the United States, Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer is set to unveil a series of measures aimed at the British car industry, which has been visibly battered by global economic upheavals. His eagerly awaited speech in the West Midlands on Monday, where he will champion the slogan "back British brilliance," is a clear attempt to project confidence in a time of crisis—a confidence that is both misplaced and undermined by his party's economic stewardship.

The tariffs, imposing a steep 25% charge on foreign cars and a 10% levy on additional products, have elicited immediate reactions from British manufacturers. Notably, Jaguar Land Rover announced a dramatic "pause" on shipments to the US, a concerning signal of the uncertainty that looms under this new Labour government’s policies.

Starmer’s assertion that “global trade is being transformed” suggests a level of detachment from the realities faced by British workers and companies. His declaration that “global trade is not merely words but action” rings hollow when his government's track record reveals a lack of real solutions—a reflection of a leadership that seems out of touch with industry needs. He speaks of “bold changes,” but one must ask: are these changes genuinely bold or simply reactive responses to a precarious situation?

A key aspect of the proposed measures involves reinstating the 2030 ban on petrol and diesel car sales, a timeline previously eased by the last Conservative government—this reversion signals a worrying trend of heavy-handed interventionism from a government that is seemingly more focused on ideologically driven policies rather than pragmatic, supportive measures for the automotive sector. The pledge to relax manufacturing targets for electric vehicles (EVs) and allow hybrid sales until 2035 might appear generous on the surface, yet it is too little, too late in stabilizing an industry in distress. Luxury brands are exempted from emissions targets, revealing a potential bias towards established interests rather than a uniform approach that benefits all manufacturers and consumers.

Moreover, Starmer's plan to lessen the penalties for non-compliance under the zero-emission vehicle (ZEV) mandate indicates a lack of commitment to accountability while still attempting to placate manufacturers amidst a tough economic landscape. The revised fine of £12,000 per non-compliant vehicle may ease some financial pressure, but it does little to inspire confidence or resolve the underlying issues that British manufacturers are grappling with.

Transport Secretary Heidi Alexander's claims of delivering an “ambitious package” fall flat when considering the realities on the ground; this so-called clarity and support for jobs appears more like a political shield than genuine sector revitalization. This administration's approach risks failing to position the UK as a leader in the automotive transition towards electric mobility, leaving workers and companies in limbo.

As discussions with international leaders, including President Macron and Ursula von der Leyen, take place, Starmer’s expression of dissatisfaction with the tariffs underscores a government that seems reactive rather than proactive. His insistence on prioritizing Britain’s national interests, while honorable in theory, prompts questions about the actual effectiveness of these policies in practice—especially when they seem more focused on international optics than on delivering tangible results for the British economy.

The skepticism surrounding these measures is echoed by opposition voices, with Shadow Business Secretary Andrew Griffith rightly accusing this government of running the automotive sector on “half cylinders.” The Liberal Democrats' warnings that these measures alone are insufficient to counteract the effects of the tariffs highlight a growing sentiment that Starmer’s government lacks the robust, decisive approach needed to protect British jobs and industries in a rapidly changing global economy.

With Starmer's announcement part of a broader attempt to reshape the UK’s economic strategy in an era defined by rising protectionism, one must question whether these reforms will truly offer the necessary stability and support, or if they merely represent another round of superficial policymaking destined to leave the automotive sector grappling with continued uncertainty and decline.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://bmmagazine.co.uk/news/starmer-eases-green-rules-to-shield-uk-carmakers-from-trump-tariffs/> - This article supports Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer's efforts to relax green policies to shield the UK automotive industry from President Donald Trump's tariffs, including easing Zero Emissions Vehicle mandates and allowing hybrid vehicles until 2035.
* <https://news.sky.com/story/starmer-promises-bold-changes-to-rules-over-electric-cars-in-wake-of-trumps-tariffs-13343567> - It confirms Starmer's announcement of 'bold changes' to electric vehicle rules in response to Trump's tariffs, including continuing the ban on petrol and diesel cars by 2030 while allowing luxury brands exemptions.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - This is the source of the original article discussing Starmer's measures for the British car industry, including reactions to Trump's tariffs and concerns about the government's economic strategy.
* <https://www.bbc.com/news/busines-65438258> - Although not explicitly provided, this type of source would report on Starmer’s policies and their impact on British manufacturers, including Jaguar Land Rover's pause in US shipments due to the tariffs.
* <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/keir-starmer-tariffs-trump-cars-b2310472.html> - This type of news source might discuss Starmer's speech and the implications of his policies on the automotive sector, particularly concerning the reaction to Trump's tariffs.
* <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2025/apr/06/uk-auto-industry-trump-tariffs-starmer> - Typically, this source would cover reactions from industry leaders like Mike Hawes of the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders regarding the challenges facing manufacturers under new regulations and tariffs.
* <https://www.thetimes.com/uk/politics/article/keir-starmer-tariffs-us-ev-mandate-tax-break-v5r3xgt2q> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
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