# Tesla pushes UK for fast-track approval amid safety concerns over self-driving cars



Elon Musk’s Tesla has made significant strides in the development of automated vehicles, actively engaging with UK government officials to push for accelerated approval for its self-driving technology. Lobbyists for the electric car manufacturer have met with civil servants from the Department for Transport (DfT) multiple times, advocating for a fast-track process to permit the deployment of autonomous vehicles (AVs) on British roads. Meetings held between August and October, surfaced through a Freedom of Information request, revealed that Tesla's priorities include securing regulatory clearance for its vehicles, especially as the UK government shifts its approach towards green technologies in transport.

In these discussions, concerns have been raised regarding safety, especially the issue of accountability should a self-driving vehicle malfunction. Emma Ward, the DfT’s director-general for road transport policy, noted a pervasive "nervousness around safety," highlighting that further work is needed to delineate responsibility in the event of operational failures. Despite Tesla’s ambitious goals, including CEO Elon Musk's aspirations of achieving fully autonomous driving—classified as "Level 5" automation—Tesla vehicles currently operate at a more limited "Level 2," which necessitates driver supervision for safe operation.

The UK government is not alone in its cautious stance. New legislation appears to be on the horizon, which may prevent car manufacturers from labelling their vehicles as "self-driving" or "driverless" unless they have undergone approved testing. This strategy aims to address ongoing safety concerns and combat potentially misleading marketing practices that could contribute to public misunderstanding of these technologies. In fact, while Tesla has marketed its "Full Self-Driving Capability" feature since 2016, it has yet to be activated in the UK while awaiting necessary regulatory approval.

Safety and regulatory issues concerning Tesla's technology have become more pronounced with recent investigations into the reliability of its Full Self-Driving (FSD) system under challenging conditions, such as fog and bright sunlight. The US regulator has scrutinised Tesla’s self-driving features, which have historically struggled in diminished visibility scenarios—issues acknowledged in the company's own user manuals. As these investigations unfold, Tesla remains engaged with regulatory bodies to address these points of concern.

The broader landscape of self-driving technology regulation in Europe also faces significant delays, as indicated by recent comments from a senior Tesla executive. Marc Van Impe, the company's outgoing head of global vehicle automation and safety policy, lamented that crucial decisions on governing FSD technologies could be postponed until as late as 2028. This delay positions the UK as a potential laggard in the adoption of self-driving cars, raising questions about the nation’s competitiveness in the evolving automotive market.

Additionally, Musk has announced plans to roll out Tesla's FSD technology across Europe by the end of 2024, contingent on receiving the necessary regulatory approvals. The situation remains dynamic, as Tesla continues to demonstrate its systems to European officials, with hopes of rapid progression through legislative hurdles. However, with ongoing safety concerns and regulatory scrutiny, the path towards widespread acceptance of autonomous vehicles in the UK is fraught with challenges that need to be carefully navigated to ensure public safety and confidence.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2061848/elon-musk-driverless-cars-uk-roads), [[2]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2023/11/25/tesla-faces-ban-selling-driverless-cars-uk/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2061848/elon-musk-driverless-cars-uk-roads), [[3]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2024/05/04/tesla-pushes-legalise-driverless-cars-uk/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[4]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2024/10/18/tesla-self-driving-cars-investigated-unsafe-fog-sunlight/), [[7]](https://www.roadandtrack.com/news/a64125012/british-government-blocks-tesla-from-launching-full-self-driving-in-the-uk/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[5]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2024/10/19/tesla-executive-attacks-europe-delays-self-driving/), [[6]](https://www.gbnews.com/lifestyle/cars/elon-musk-tesla-self-driving-europe-2025)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2061848/elon-musk-driverless-cars-uk-roads> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2023/11/25/tesla-faces-ban-selling-driverless-cars-uk/> - Tesla faces a ban on selling its full self-driving technology in Britain under new driverless car laws, as the Department for Transport plans to prevent carmakers from describing vehicles as 'self-driving' or 'driverless' unless their systems are approved. This move aims to address safety concerns and prevent misleading marketing practices. Tesla has been selling cars with 'Full Self-Driving Capability' since 2016, but the feature is not yet activated in the UK pending regulatory approval. ([telegraph.co.uk](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2023/11/25/tesla-faces-ban-selling-driverless-cars-uk/?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2024/05/04/tesla-pushes-legalise-driverless-cars-uk/> - Tesla is actively lobbying to legalise its self-driving system in the UK and Europe, demonstrating its 'full self-driving' (FSD) technology to officials on European roads. The company is also involved in updating UN regulations governing advanced driver assistance systems, aiming to legalise the technology by the end of next year. FSD can stop at traffic lights, change lanes automatically, and navigate junctions, but requires constant supervision by the driver. ([telegraph.co.uk](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2024/05/04/tesla-pushes-legalise-driverless-cars-uk/?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2024/10/18/tesla-self-driving-cars-investigated-unsafe-fog-sunlight/> - Tesla's self-driving cars are under investigation for safety concerns in foggy and bright sunlight conditions. The US highways regulator is examining the ability of Tesla's Full Self-Driving (FSD) system to detect and respond appropriately to reduced roadway visibility. Tesla's owner manuals warn that low visibility can significantly degrade performance, and the company is cooperating with the investigation. ([telegraph.co.uk](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2024/10/18/tesla-self-driving-cars-investigated-unsafe-fog-sunlight/?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2024/10/19/tesla-executive-attacks-europe-delays-self-driving/> - A senior Tesla executive has resigned, criticising Europe's delays in approving self-driving technology. Marc Van Impe, Tesla's outgoing head of global vehicle automation and safety policy, stated that a crucial decision on rules governing Tesla's Full Self-Driving (FSD) system in Britain and Europe had been delayed, possibly until as late as 2028. This delay could make Britain among the last major international markets to allow the technology. ([telegraph.co.uk](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2024/10/19/tesla-executive-attacks-europe-over-delays-to-self-driving/?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.gbnews.com/lifestyle/cars/elon-musk-tesla-self-driving-europe-2025> - Elon Musk has pledged to roll out Tesla's 'Full Self-Driving' technology across Europe within months, pending regulatory approval. Tesla is aiming to launch the technology in Europe and China by the end of 2024, with the rollout expected to begin in 2025. The company has yet to receive regulatory permission to launch its FSD technology in Europe and China, with questions surrounding whether a decision will be made within the next three months. ([gbnews.com](https://www.gbnews.com/lifestyle/cars/elon-musk-tesla-self-driving-europe-2025?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://www.roadandtrack.com/news/a64125012/british-government-blocks-tesla-from-launching-full-self-driving-in-the-uk/> - The British government has blocked Tesla from launching its Full Self-Driving (FSD) technology in the UK, citing safety concerns. UK officials stated that introducing system-initiated maneuvers entails unknown risks, and while a driver assistance system may help reduce collisions, it may also introduce new safety risks. A joint statement from the UK, Norway, Sweden, and the Netherlands reaffirmed European skepticism toward self-driving technology, expressing hope in technological advancements but highlighting concerns about the impact on driver behavior and situational awareness. ([roadandtrack.com](https://www.roadandtrack.com/news/a64125012/british-government-blocks-tesla-from-launching-full-self-driving-in-the-uk/?utm_source=openai))