

RDM boss welcomes positive 'appetite' for LUTZ

The Coventry-based manufacturer behind the design and build of the LUTZ Pathfinder pod has welcomed a new online poll that highlights a positive reaction to self-driving vehicles in Milton Keynes.

David Keene, Chairman of automotive experts RDM Group, believes the survey . carried out by YouGov . highlights a growing interest in driverless pods and the benefits they can provide to people living, working and visiting UK cities.

Commissioned by the Transport Systems Catapult organisation which is overseeing the LUTZ Pathfinder trial, the independent poll found that 61% of adults living in the Buckinghamshire town would be interested in using the electric-powered two-seater pods for making short hop journeys.

That compared to interest levels of 38% among respondents in the UK as a whole. When it came to people in the national survey, who had already heard something about the project before taking part, the figure rose to 48% . suggesting that familiarity with the trials is helping to improve public attitudes towards the technology.

This is a major boost for the project at a time when we are entering the next stage of the trials, explained David.

The work the Transport Systems Catapult has done in raising the profile of LUTZ appears to be paying dividends and, whilst there will always be concerns about something as game-changing as this, there appears a willingness to give it a try.

He continued: Self-driving vehicles have the potential to be a major growth opportunity for the UK in years to come and the work we are doing here could give us the platform to be at the forefront of other global projects.

It has certainly put RDM on the international map and highlights how an advanced engineering business . supported by the right partners . has the potential to lead on future transport solutions.

The LUTZ Pathfinder pods have been designed and manufactured by RDM Group and are equipped with an autonomous control system developed by the University of Oxford's world-leading Mobile Robotics Group.

Up to three pods are being used during the trial, with each one being driven initially in manual mode as it learns its environment. Once they have begun to operate in self-driving mode, a trained test driver will remain for the duration of the trial, ready to take control of the vehicle if required.

The trial will culminate in a public demonstration of the technology, due to take place in Milton Keynes later this year. Findings from the trial will also be fed into the larger-scale three-year UK Autodrive programme, which will involve a fleet of 40 pods as well as regular road-based cars operating in Milton Keynes and Coventry.

Other findings from The YouGov poll include:

- Awareness of the project is already high, with nearly one in four adults (23%) in the UK having heard about the trial. In Milton Keynes more than three quarters (78%) of those surveyed had done so.

- For both the national and local surveys, safety topped the list of concerns about the technology, followed by worries about malfunctions and breakdowns.
- Low cost of use and proven safety were the primary factors that would make the respondents more likely to use a self-driving vehicle.

The LUTZ Pathfinder project is trialling the technical capabilities of self-driving vehicles, but it also has an equally important role in increasing public awareness about this technology, and its potential benefits, said Transport Systems Catapult CEO Steve Yianni.

It's wonderful to see how much the people of Milton Keynes are getting behind the project, and we'll continue to engage with the public and watch how they interact with the pods as the project progresses.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Two surveys were carried out online. Fieldwork was undertaken between 4th–11th December 2015. National survey had a total sample size of 2106 UK adults. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK adults (aged 18+). Milton Keynes survey had a total sample size of 79 adults. These figures have been weighted and are representative of all adults in Milton Keynes (aged 18+).

The Transport Systems Catapult is the UK's technology and innovation centre for Intelligent Mobility, harnessing emerging technologies to improve the movement of people and goods around the world. It is one of an elite network of not-for-profit technology and innovation centres established and overseen by the UK's innovation agency, Innovate UK. For more information see www.ts.catapult.org.uk

For more information on LUTZ Pathfinder, please head to www.lutzpods.co.uk.

For media enquiries relating to the survey or to the LUTZ Pathfinder project as a whole, please contact mark.ledsom@ts.catapult.org.uk Tel: 07508 023758. For media enquiries relating to RDM Group, please contact russ@cucumberpr.co.uk. Tel: 07812 600271.