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Transport Select Committee
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From the Parliamentary
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7 July 2026

Dear Ruth,

The Automated Vehicles (Marketing Restrictions) Regulations 2026 and consultation outcome

I wish to provide the Transport Select Committee with an update on implementation of the Automated Vehicles Act 2024 (the “AV Act”).

Today, I have published the Government Response to the Protecting Marketing Terms consultation and laid the Automated Vehicles (Marketing Restrictions) Regulations 2026 statutory instrument (SI).

The AV Act sets out an authorisation process to determine whether a vehicle can drive itself safely and legally without being controlled or monitored by a human. This process would be undermined if businesses are able to claim that their vehicles are self-driving without getting the vehicles authorised, which may lead to confusion about vehicle capabilities and driver responsibilities.

As more manufacturers offer high-end driver assistance systems, misleading marketing risks worsening road safety and could undermine trust and successful adoption of self-driving vehicle technology and the realisation of its road safety benefits.

Consultation Outcome and Rationale

The purpose of the Protecting Marketing Terms consultation was to identify the words, expressions, symbols or marks that should only be used to describe authorised or listed AVs. These regulations will help prevent end-users in Great Britain from being misled into thinking that

vehicles that are not authorised AVs can safely and lawfully drive themselves.

The consultation outcome can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/automated-vehicles-protecting-marketing-terms>

The consultation demonstrated strong support for protecting certain marketing terms so they may only be legally used to describe vehicles authorised or listed as able to safely drive themselves. This measure is intended to:

- safeguard the integrity of the authorisation and listing process;
- preserve fair competition across the sector;
- advance road safety and support public understanding; and
- build public trust in self-driving technology.

The majority of respondents, including major AV technology companies, the insurance sector and road safety organisations have welcomed this proposal, noting that it will enhance clarity for consumers, improve road safety, and strengthen confidence in automated vehicle technology.

Protected Terms and Scope

The following terms will be reserved for authorised or listed vehicles:

- Automated
- Automated driving
- Autonomous
- Autonomous driving
- Drive autonomously
- Drive itself
- Driverless
- Self-driving

This protection will extend to different parts of speech and other grammatical forms of these terms. Additionally, the words “automated” and “autonomous” will only be protected when used to describe a vehicle as a whole or a vehicle’s overall driving capability, while remaining permissible for specific parts or features (e.g. automated windscreen wipers or autonomous emergency braking).

Other Terms and Enforcement

Some consultees suggested additional terms such as “robotaxi” and “AI driver”, these will be regulated under the general confusion offence (section 79). I recognise that in future there may be other terms which could give a misleading impression that a vehicle is able to drive itself. This is why the protected terms offence under section 78 operates alongside the confusion offence under section 79. The government will keep this under review, with possibility to protect further terms in future.

The AV Act places a duty on the Secretary of State to enforce the marketing offences. In practice, enforcement to be carried out by the Department’s agencies through civil powers under Schedule 5 to the AV Act. Where a breach of the marketing offences results in criminal prosecution and conviction, the maximum penalty is set as a 2-year prison term, a fine or both.

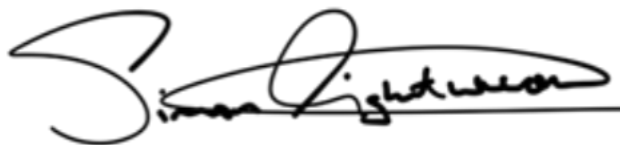
The power to make the SI to protect marketing terms for AVs is vested in the Secretary of State, and both offences will apply to England, Scotland and Wales.

Next Steps

Some respondents raised an interest in further guidance on Part 4 of the AV Act (misleading marketing) and the government will consider developing supporting materials. A wider programme of education, research, and review is also under consideration.

My officials are happy to answer any queries you have, and I look forward to discussing these developments with you in due course.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simon Lightwood', with a stylized, flowing script.

SIMON LIGHTWOOD MP

MINISTER FOR ROADS AND BUSES