Twitter Thread by Robbie Andrew



Robbie Andrew
@robbie_andrew



I doubt there are many outside of Norway that know that the Norwegian pop group A-ha was critical in the introduction of electric car incentives in Norway. I certainly didn't. Read on...

In 1989, two members of the group, Morten Harket and Magne Furuholmen were in Switzerland with environmentalist Frederic Hauge, when they came across a hobby-converted Fiat Panda. Stated range: 45 km. They snapped it up and imported it to Norway.

Photo: In Switzerland (Bellona)

On arrival in Norway, the regs didn't accommodate the registration of electric cars so it couldn't legally be driven on the road. Since it had a propane-fuelled heater, just like a motorhome, they registered it as a motorhome.

Moreover, in contrast to petrol cars, diesel cars paid registration fees based on how far they were driven, and our heroes thought this should also apply to electric cars. So the two-seater Swiss-converted Fiat Panda was registered as a diesel motorhome in Norway.

They managed (somehow) to avoid paying the one-off registration fee in 1990, and ever since then electric cars have been exempted this now-substantial fee.
Source: https://t.co/EZzU7U2sT7

They were unhappy with "disincentives" to owning an electric car, including road tolls. So they drove repeatedly through toll stations without paying. Every time, they received a fine, which they didn't pay. According to the rules, the car was then confiscated.

Photo: Bellona.

When confiscated, the car was auctioned, but since no-one else wanted to buy the car, only our heroes were at the auction to buy it back again. They they drove without paying tolls, car confiscated again, car auctioned again, bought back again... and this went on, and on, and on.

The fine was 300 Norwegian crowns each time, and they bought the car back each time for 200 Norwegian crowns (i.e., for less than the fine).

Source: https://t.co/TkqYneOUqT

Finally, in 1996, the team had their way and electric cars were exempted from paying road tolls, the star power of A-ha helping along the way. Presumably the government just gave up, since exempting one car wasn't going to break the bank.

Source: https://t.co/BhDJ7WKTZj

These early efforts were important in the long process (starting with the oil crises in the 1970s) of developing interest in electric cars in Norway, from a few individuals through to 2020's extraordinary record 54% of all new cars sold being battery-electric.

For more on the historical of electric cars in Norway from the 1970s, check out TØI's report here (in Norwegian).
https://t.co/iIrvRcr7TN

Note that while some sources say that the converted Fiat Panda was in 1989 the first electric car in Norway, the history goes a bit further back.
https://t.co/zUc79l0Ho1