

Man Utd's Ratcliffe unveils electric Ineos car

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A model of the Ineos Fusilier 4x4 electric vehicle.

Manchester United's new co-owner Jim Ratcliffe unveiled Friday his Ineos group's latest 4x4 vehicle, which will come in two electric versions as the British billionaire criticized range limits on 'green' cars.

The Ineos Fusilier, whose production should start at a facility in Austria

in 2027, rather than 2026 as earlier planned, will be a slightly smaller version of the Ineos Grenadier.

It comes as the group works on a second model also with a military name—the Grenadier Quartermaster pickup truck.

Ratcliffe, 71, earlier this week completed a deal to become co-owner of Manchester United, with a pledge to drive the English football giants to renewed success.

Asked by AFP at Friday's launch about his off-pitch plans at United, including a stadium rebuild, Ratcliffe replied: "The focus with Manchester United is really simple, that's performance on the field."

One of Britain's richest men thanks to Ineos' core chemicals business, Ratcliffe has in recent years turned the group into a conglomerate, with ownership of football and cycling teams—and production of vehicles.

On Friday, he noted that a desire by subsidiary Ineos Automotive to produce zero-carbon cars was hampered by how far they could travel without a recharge.

'Huge electric car failings'

The Fusilier would come in two versions, Ratcliffe announced—an all-electric model and the other a range-extender type which would carry a generator-powered battery and fuel tank.

Ratcliffe told a press conference gathered at a central London pub that his personal preference was the latter version.

"The big problem I have with the (all-) electric vehicle... it has two huge failings," he said shortly after the blue car's unveiling outside The

Grenadier pub renamed The Fusilier for the event.

"It doesn't get you from A to B if you want to go on a decent journey. It does the urban stuff very well... (but) you can't fill it up. Those are two major drawbacks of an electric car."

Ratcliffe added, "My personal strong preference is the same electric vehicle but with a range extender."

'Industry in flux'

Ineos said the new model would be developed with automotive supplier, Magna, which will manufacture the vehicle at its Graz facility in Austria.

It was originally thought that the car would be produced in France.

Car enthusiast Ratcliffe, who was a leading business voice in favor of Britain's Brexit divorce from the European Union, began producing cars after he identified a gap in the market for a rugged new 4x4.

This after the final Land Rover Defender was produced in 2016.

Ratcliffe on Friday said the world's auto industry was "in flux".

"People know what the objectives are, which is to reduce the carbon footprint of the world's automotive fleet," he told reporters.

"If you're a car producer in Europe, you have to have a 'green' offering, you can't survive as a large car company without that because the regulations won't allow you to.

"We have to have this offering if we like it or not. We do like it because it's a good thing for the world," Ratcliffe said of his new car, adding that

he thought the United States was more flexible than Europe on switching to electric vehicles.

Friday's unveiling came at the end of a week in which the tycoon finalized a minority stake in United—the team he supports—giving him almost 28 percent of the club which has struggled for on-field success in recent seasons.

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