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GWM ORA Funky Cat 1st Edition – Road Test

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Author:

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The GWM ORA Funky Cat 1st Edition, Robin Roberts (and Miles Better News Agency) tells us if it was an 'electrifying' experience...

The UK's electric car revolution is becoming a bloody affair.

From initially resisting the new technology on cost grounds, including writing off established investments in petrol and diesel engine technology and having to develop hybrid or pure electric powertrains, along with making tens of thousands of workers redundant, manufacturers have struggled to convince buyers into showrooms or on-line.

It's not helped that the recharging network has been a piecemeal development which has shown up under-capacity and cost and in some cases the simple inability to provide a home charger at all.

Alongside these are questions over the real environmental costs of mining materials and building the batteries and electric motors.

Slowly, very slowly, the new generation of pure EVs is coming as the end of ICEs is now planned for 2035. Or is it? That's another question mark hanging over the whole sorry affair as e-fuels which are chemical blends intended to replace fossil-fuels are now being proposed and adopted across Europe.

Now, just as the established motor manufacturers are uncomfortably adjusting to the arrival of EVs, they have another challenger appearing over horizon, the Chinese brands.

The EV sector in China has been strongly developing and we will see a number of them long before 2035, led it seems by Great Wall Motor Co., whose newly created ORA brand is a dedicated pure-battery range, beginning with this 1st Edition called the Funky Cat priced at £32,000.



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The 'funky' bonnet badge that looks like an exclamation mark!

While you may smile at the somewhat convoluted characterisation, it comes with some serious engineering from a car-maker who assembles BMW MINIs in China.

GWM has a history of copying appearances and it's therefore not really surprising to see elements of MINI throughout the ORA 1st Edition. Front lights and grille really resemble the MINI, the rounded rear also suggests some uplifting and the profile is a sort of bigger scale version.

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Inside, the console switchgear could be taken from an early BMW MINI or even the classic original, while instead of a big round multi-dial instrument the ORA features a wide digital display resplendent with carp swimming across it when you get in. It might get you hooked.

Naturally, being electric it comes with a simple turn-knob switch to go forward, reverse or lock the system and you don't even turn a key as it just goes. You can adjust the weight of the power steering but not the motor power response.



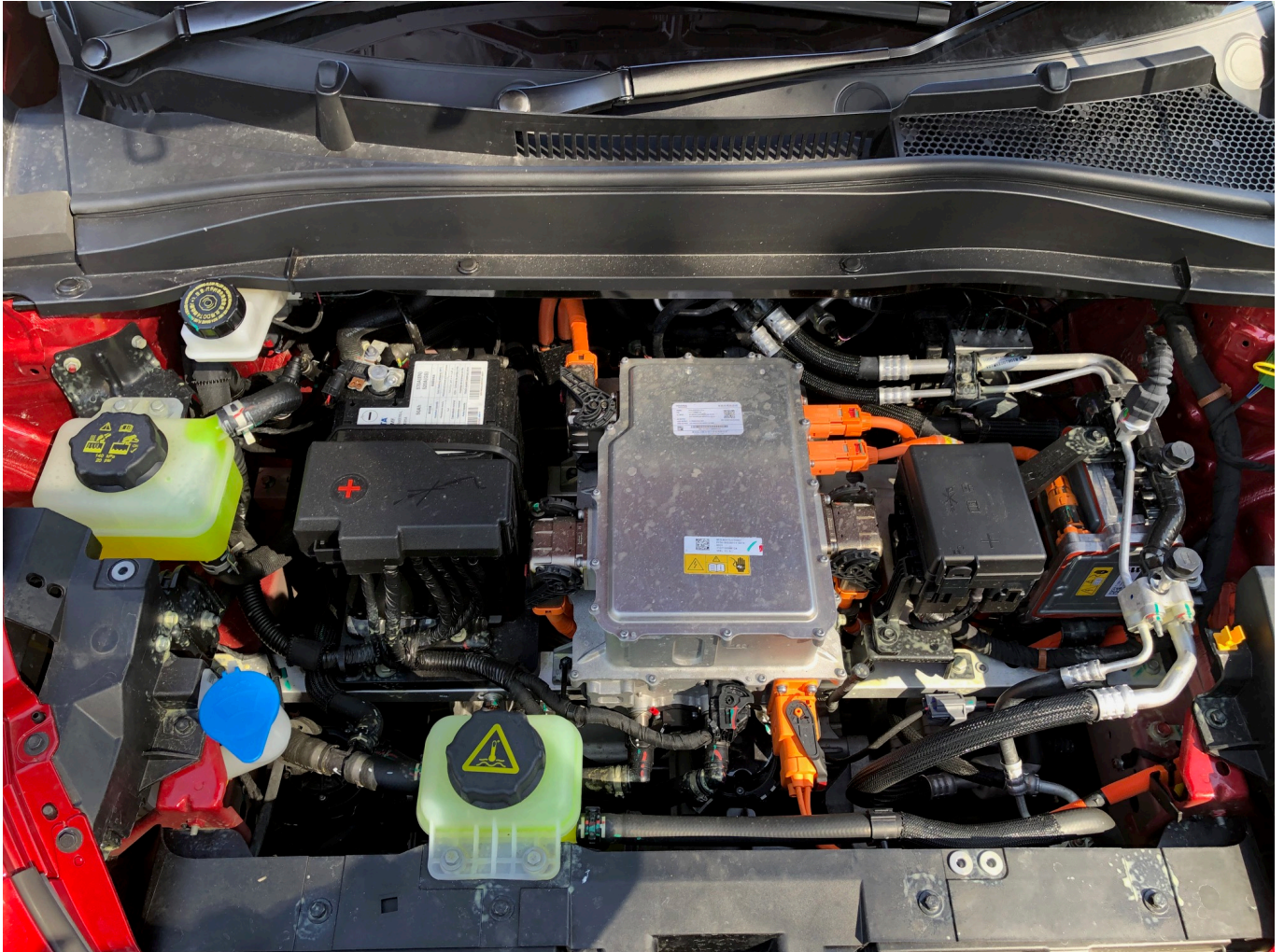
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Being a mid-sized 48 kWh battery, GWM has decided it will operate on 6.6, 11 or 100 kW chargers only from 5hrs to 43 mins at best to reach 80% capacity and the claimed range is 193 miles, while it will reach the UK motorway maximum and have about 29mph left.



Behind the wheel, the GWM ORA initially impresses with its roominess both in front and behind for passengers as a five-seater. That fishy tech always made me smile before it cleared to show the driving display I chose from a menu.

The display's very clear and includes features such as lane centering and distance radar and a few warning lights in addition to the road speed.

The central display is your settings centre to select what you want to show and how you want the car to work including three stages of power recuperation from the brakes so you can effectively drive it in a single pedal operation, steering weight, accessories power-



saving activation and so on. It also houses the navigation system while secondary switches below work the heating and ventilation system.

You can charge your phone or other accessories and hot wire into the infotainment, but it does not as yet support Apple or Android systems.

Oddments room was good for a family car with door bins, central box and trays, along with a small rear parcel shelf but the space for occupants has reduced nominal bootspace suitable only for a few shopping bags or two flight cases before you have to drop the seatbacks and more than triple capacity.

Access to the boot was very good and also into the cabin. Once inside the head and legroom was very good and those in front have a wide range of seat adjustment and the steering column moved for reach and rake.

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Visibility was very good to front and sides, aided by blindspot cameras in the door mirrors and I found the clear reversing camera particularly useful as the back window is small and does not have a wash/ wipe system. The front wipers and wash system is very good, good output and big swept area and you can set the wiper rate through the central display.

ON THE ROAD



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The GWM ORA had a smooth powertrain and reasonable feedback from the steering on winding roads, strong brakes when applied to override the inbuilt recuperation and a good electric handbrake.

Its ride was slightly firm and sometimes odd bumps could find their way into the cabin but it was generally compliant and composed. The car is not a sporting model, body roll happened on corners taken at speed and it tended to run wide on tighter turns until the throttle was lifted and then it smartly moved back on line.

Acceleration was respectable and it had no trouble keeping up with traffic, quietly cruised



dual carriageways and motorways and comes with domestic and charge-point cables as standard, which not all EVs have.

You can preselect an Eco mode for the power consumption and it may then be possible to exceed the 170 miles range we obtained and get it closer to the claimed 193 miles.

The GWM Ora is not a cheap and cheerful EV and interior fit and finish looks high quality, is nicely colour matched and everything had a very sturdy feel including the glovebox closing.

The diamond pattern finish to door casings could come straight out of an executive model and some of the driver aids such as the lane keeping and blindspot cameras are more familiar in cars costing at least a third more than the ORA.

GWM has done a good job making the ORA look different both externally and internally and it's wisely decided to prioritise roominess, compromised battery capacity and range, so what it lacks in the latest software should be updated in a "2nd Edition" if that's what they call the successor.

With EV sales rising from the latest UK registration figures there is still a lot of interest in this new generation of cars but PCPs maybe the way to protect against any dip in second hand values which has been reported in the trade.

VERDICT

The GWM ORA adds to choice without compromising quality and is a tougher rival to established car makers than they might have imagined.

For: Roomy, well specified, good fit and finish, reasonable performance, clear visibility.

Against: Small boot, fiddly infotainment display and activation without Apple or Android connectivity, noisy ride and some body roll, no rear wiper, one single version for now, limited dealer network but it's growing.



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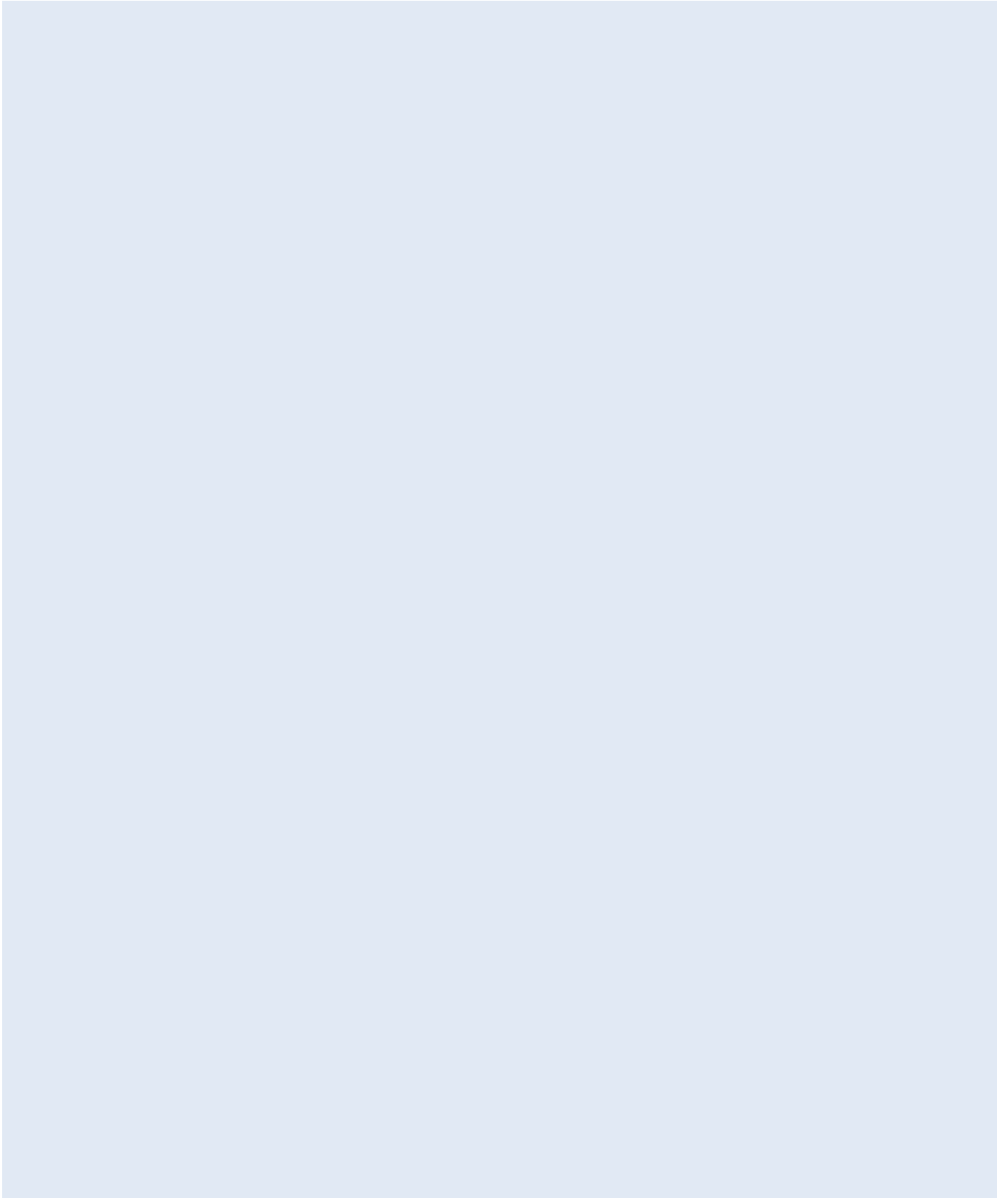
FAST FACTS

Model: GWM Funky Cat 1st Edition



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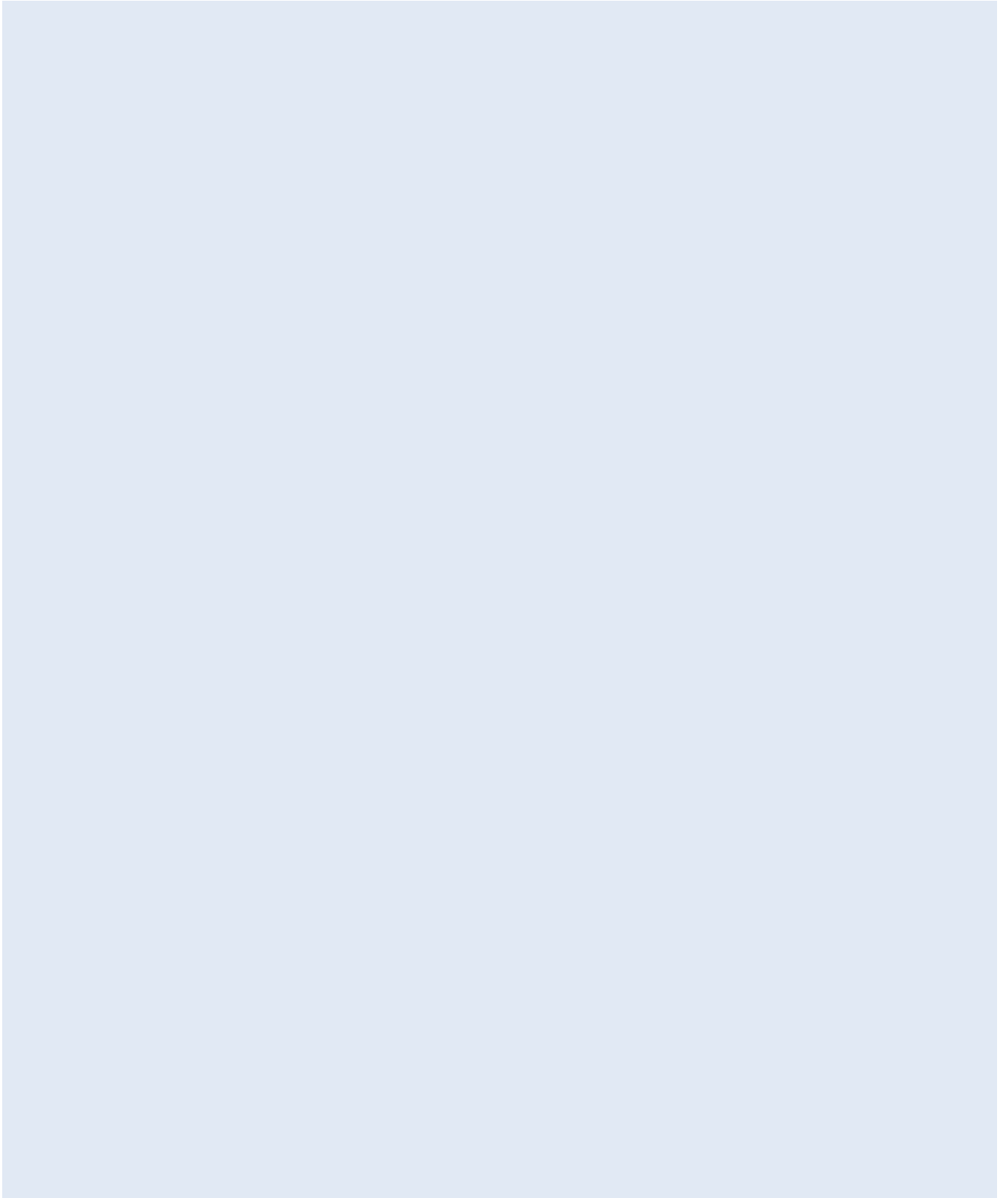
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Price: £32,000

Mechanical: 171PS single speed motor, 48 kWh battery, front wheel drive

Max Speed: 99 mph

0 - 62 mph: 8.3 sec

Range: 170 to 190 miles

Insurance Group: 21

CO2 emissions: Zero

Tax costs: Bik rating 2%, VED £ZeroFY, £ZeroSR

Warranty: 5 years unlimited miles

Size: L 4.24 m (13.91 ft), W 1.83 m (6.00 ft), H 1.61 m (5.28 ft)

Bootpace: 228 to 858 litres (8.05 to 30.30 cu.ft)

Kerbweight: 1,540 kg (3,395 lb)