



## ICE plan for hydrogen class

### LE MANS 24 HOURS

The Le Mans 24 Hours is ready to open up its forthcoming hydrogen class to internal combustion engines. Race organiser the Automobile Club de l'Ouest looks set to allow them into a category conceived for electric prototypes powered by hydrogen fuel cells.

ACO president Pierre Fillon explained that the change of tack resulted from a desire to give manufacturers different routes into a category due for introduction in 2025 at a time when hydrogen-powered ICE technology is being explored for road car applications.

"There is a new subject in hydrogen because now some manufacturers are talking about internal combustion engines," said Fillon. "The idea of hydrogen ICEs could be interesting for the manufacturers. We will open the competition for all the solutions. We want hydrogen and zero emissions, but the way to achieve that is in the hands of the manufacturers. Maybe it might be a way for them to spend less money; a fuel cell car still needs a lot of development to reduce weight."

Toyota is already experimenting with the technology in endurance racing in Japan. Last year it debuted the Corolla H2 Concept, which is powered by the three-cylinder turbo engine from the GR Yaris modified to run on hydrogen. Company boss Akio Toyoda is a key proponent of the project and was among the drivers when it made its debut in last year's Fuji 24 Hours.

Toyota Gazoo Racing Europe technical director Pascal Vasselon said that it was important for the ACO to explore different routes available to bring hydrogen-powered machinery to Le Mans. "Technology is moving fast in the carbon-neutral field," he explained. "Four or five years ago there was only real fuel cell as a mature technology. Now progress has been made with hydrogen combustion engines that if there is a hydrogen future at Le Mans – and there will be – it makes sense to open the door to different technologies that can do the job."

The plans for the category as they stand allow a manufacturer to develop the fuel cell only. ORECA and Red Bull Racing Technologies will produce the chassis, [GreenGT](#) the electric powertrain.

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