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Climate Cars makes silver the new corporate green

25 June 2010



Nicko Williamson, celebrating his companies third birthday and first profit, is excited by what the future for green driving may be able to offer capital cities such as London. The young entrepreneur (Williamson is just 26 years old), has founded Climate Cars, a silver-coloured fleet of low carbon chauffeured vehicles, targeted specifically for corporates.

He has already been to test drive a Tesla and is excited about the future possibilities of turning his entire fleet completely electric. But in an interview with NewNet he was quick to point out that the technology has some way to run before he can incorporate it fully into his fast growing

executive corporate car service.

Corporate car companies, like Climate Cars and their competitors, are litmus tests for the electric car technology. If they can make financial sense out of purchasing this technology, then it will not be long before carbon free driving becomes a generally accepted norm rather than a city gimmick.

'The electric car would need to be able to a minimum of a hundred miles between charges, for it to make any sense for us,' says Williamson.

Taxi companies such as Climate Cars exacerbate the infrastructure problem for electric adoption because they do not have a central depot where all the cars start in the morning. The idea of running an electric fleet must therefore be moulded to peripatetic nature of the driver's lives. They run a 24 hour service, the drivers are self employed, and the cars live outside the driver's houses.

'Our drivers do this job for the independence it gives them, and a centralised depot may impede our driver's lifestyle. Also, I don't see a way of creating a central charging infrastructure in London without a sizeable future investment, there is also the considerable issue of finding enough space for a depot,' adds Williamson.

With a different business model, space would have certainly been an issue, as Climate Cars is fast approaching a fleet of 60 cars, targeting a turnover approaching £2m for next year. This will be achieved through the growing the fleet size by about another 40 cars. Creating a supply of batteries that could simply be swapped by divers, is one answer which could work for climate cars, however the according to Williamson the best transition phase would be a 'hybrid plug in'.

'Ultimately the practice of swapping batteries could be an answer, but there is still the case of the scale of delivery to meet our needs. I feel that the secret lies in a transition technology where our drivers could drive the car home and then plug it in, they would be incentivised by the cheaper cost of electricity over fuel,' concluded Williamson.

London's Hackney Carriages, the ubiquitous black cabs, are now finding themselves under pressure to perform against a new wave of green competitors. The black cab used to be the mainstay of the London transport system, but in recent years is has come under pressure from companies like Addison Lee and a plethora of licensed and unlicensed vehicles.

If Williamson's hunch continues to pay off the days of corporate black cab account may well be numbered. At 23 years of age, the Climate Cars CEO found himself getting bored of driving up and down to Bristol University, when he drove past a company trying to sell green fuel. The resulting idea is now a profitable fleet of discreet Eco Silver Prius, taking London's top businessmen around capital.

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This story was published on Friday, June 25th, 2010 at 3:13 pm and is filed under [Europe](#), [energy efficiency](#), [features](#). You can follow any responses to article entry through the [RSS 2.0](#) feed. You can skip to the end and leave a response. Pinging is currently not allowed.

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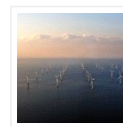
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