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Climatecars - a  
reassuringly green ride  
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## Project profile

August 2007

Climatecars - a clean and green ride  
Energy and Transport Editor Hugh Goulbourne speaks to young  
business entrepreneur Nicko Williamson about his new eco-taxi  
company:

Q. What is the purpose/background to the project?

R. *I came up with the idea of an environmentally friendly taxi  
company while at Bristol of University. On the way home I used to  
drive past an LPG conversion centre -called Greenfuels - and this  
gave me an idea to convert a fleet of people carriers to LPG and to  
offer a green taxi service.*

*The idea progressed and I moved away from LPG and decided to  
focus on hybrids as the first step. Although LPG is significantly  
cleaner, in terms of emissions of noxious nitrogen gases and  
particulates, the CO2 savings were not sufficient for us at  
Climatecars.*

*I wanted to offer commercial and individual clients a green  
alternative that would not only be better for the environment but  
would give them a level of service and a product that was much  
better than anything else on the market at a price that was  
competitive and good value. Hence why I put leather seats in the  
vehicles, fridges with complimentary Belu water and magazines  
and newspapers.*

*I wanted to combine luxury with reduced emissions and in this  
sense Climatecars offers Londoners a unique proposition. I also  
wanted the service to be cool and for people to feel that by  
reducing emissions they are doing the right thing. So I decided to  
subtly brand the cars for recognition and invest in a solid brand  
identity.*

*Lastly, I wanted to provide all of this at a competitive cost. So we  
are less expensive than the market leader ,Addison Lee, and in  
line or less than many of our competitors.*

Q. I am not sure if you know or are aware of our previous feature  
business Acorn House restaurant - but it strikes me that your project  
is similar in that by aiming at the luxury end of the market,  
Climatecars is able to provide people with the opportunity to reduce  
their emissions without lowering standards.

R. *Yes, we see it as one way in which all of us who pollute the  
most can reduce our Carbon emissions in everyday life without  
having to make compromises on quality or experience.*

Q. What do you see as your main green credentials?

R. *We presently only use the Toyota Prius hybrid, with the lowest  
CO2 emissions in its class. We offset all our unavoidable  
emissions through the Carbon Neutral Company.*

*Our office is powered by renewable energy from Ecotricity, we  
recycle wherever possible -we even have an eco-kettle.*

Q. Are there any other selling points?

R. *I have mentioned them above: leather seats, air conditioning,  
brand new cars, magazines, newspapers and fridges in all cars  
with free water. We have the latest technology, GPS driven  
dispatch system, text on arrive and we will have online booking in  
the near future when we are large enough to handle it.*

*For the fair weather (but environmentally conscience) cyclist we  
operate a bike rescue service, whereby we carry bike racks in  
our cars and take our customers bikes home fixed to the back of  
the car.*

Q. What about the wider industry and/or public policy benefits?

R. *Climatecars will help more companies reduce their emissions  
through using hybrids as supposed to people carriers, ordinary  
saloons and black cabs. There will also be wider benefits as other  
companies in the private hire/taxi industry seek to green their  
fleets, as demand increases.*

*In the future as more people use Climatecars and our  
competitors: competitive pressure will force private transport in  
general to become greener, which will benefit Londoners as they  
call for a cleaning up of the general infrastructure. Operating a  
green fleet will become a perquisite for every business in the  
private transport sector.*

Q. Can you share with us some of your exciting future plans, if any?

R. *This is just the start! My eventual aim is to be the first zero  
emission cab company.*

*First, we plan to expand Climatecars to a point where we will be a  
market leader due to the service we operate not just our  
environmental credentials.*

*We have already started exploring cleaner technologies and  
alternative fuels. I am currently in early stage talks with a  
company that claims to have some very interesting technology to  
reduce the emissions of vehicles. I can't say more than this as I  
don't know as yet when this will come to fruition. I am told that the  
technology exists and it is only a matter of them getting the  
license before it is ready.*

*In the future I feel confident that a proportion of our fleet will be  
fully electric. With the technology from the Telsa roadster being  
proven I am confident that we will have battery-powered cars with  
a viable range for this business in the near future.*

Q. Any idea how you would ensure that the electricity input is CO2  
neutral - would you be able to set up a renewables (e.g., wind and/or  
solar) based charging facility for the batteries?

R. *Once we do start to operate fully electric vehicles the  
electricity will have to be from renewable sources. I should  
imagine we will talk to the main players in the green electricity  
market to find a suitable source to match our environmental  
needs and be commercially viable. Hopefully there will soon also  
be, as in other European countries and some US states, a range  
of commercially viable and local/off-grid renewables providers  
and options.*

(Climatecars can be found at [www.climatecars.com](http://www.climatecars.com) Direct line.  
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