Eco cars: a consumer perspective

Richard Headland, Editor, Which? Car

which.co.uk/cars
Overview

1. Selling the electric dream
2. The electric car driven
3. The RAC Foundation’s Future Car Challenge
4. Which? research
5. Where next?
Selling the electric dream

“That’s still twice the price I’m used to paying”
Selling the electric dream

SIMPLY RECHARGE OVERNIGHT!

“Hmm, so it takes 8 hours to fully recharge?”
Selling the electric dream

IDEAL FOR CITY DWELLERS!

“But I don’t have a driveway or garage”
Selling the electric dream

“Sounds good, but will I make it back again?”

GREAT FOR DAYS
OUT TO BRIGHTON!
Selling the electric dream

“So it’s fine to use the heater, demister, satnav and lights?”
HARDLY EVER NEED NEW BATTERIES!

“But when I do, will I need a second mortgage?”
Video review: Mitsubishi i-MiEV

We aimed to drive from London to Hertford on one charge...

Only brave private buyers are likely to take the leap at present
Electric cars: many reasons to vote ‘Yes’

✓ Zero tailpipe emissions
✓ Cleaner city centre air
✓ Cheap to run
✓ Break our oil addiction
✓ Low taxation
✓ Money-saving perks
✓ Surprisingly good to drive
The RAC Foundation study

Key takeouts

▪ How confusing it all is for consumers

▪ How cheaply you can travel from Brighton to London in a car (£1.44 is a fifth of the cost of the cheapest National Express ticket!)

▪ Surprised that electric cars didn’t come out best for emissions

▪ Still no closer to clarity on ‘embedded emissions’ (full lifecycle)

▪ NEDC is inadequate for helping consumers really compare new technologies
Headline findings were similar to RAC Foundation report

- Compared three electric cars (Mitsubishi i-MiEV, Nissan Leaf and Smart ForTwo ED) with three equivalent low-CO2 ICE cars
- Calculated CO2 emissions for EVs ranged from 68 - 84g/km (103 - 131g/km measured for ICE cars)
- 50-mile fuel cost ranged from £1.21 - £1.50 for EVs (£4.27 to £5.44 for ICE cars)
- Close battle between Nissan Leaf and VW Golf BlueMotion on CO2 emissions, but not on running costs, price or range

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<th>COSTS AND CO2 OUTPUT</th>
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<td></td>
<td>SPEC</td>
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<tr>
<td>NISSAN Leaf</td>
<td>5dr auto</td>
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<td>VOLKSWAGEN Golf</td>
<td>1.6 TDI Bluemotion 5dr</td>
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Fuel d = diesel e = electric. a After discount/incentive. b After three years and 36,000 miles. Values from CAP c Nissan claim
Feedback on our March issue

We were disappointed with the reader feedback on the Eco Cars article, compared with other ‘Test Lab’ features in the same issue.

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45% of Which? members would consider getting an electric car in the future.

Half of members would be interested in finding out more about electric cars.

Seven in 10 members believe that a single charge only lasts a limited distance, and half that they’re too expensive.

Around a third (35%) are also doubtful of the environmental benefits.

And only 18% think that they are cheap to run.

Survey carried out using the Which? Connect omnibus from 28 October - 3 November 2010. A total of 2,110 members completed the survey.
Main barriers to overcome with consumers

- Can I afford one?
- Will it be cheaper to run? (resale value, fuel, batteries etc)
- Will it replace my current car? (range, everyday practicality)
- Will I have to make compromises? (safety, equipment, functionality)
- Will it be strange to drive? Will I have to learn anything new? Will it be slow?
Where next?

- Pure EVs will only ever appeal to some urban/suburban drivers unless the range radically improves - but they certainly have a key role to play.

- Plug-in hybrids and range-extended EVs appear to offer a very exciting, practical way forward in the short to medium term...

- ...especially as diesel hybrids now emerging (Peugeot 3008 Hybrid4 in autumn 2011)

- Development of hydrogen and fuel-cell technologies appears to be moving too slowly to be or real consumer interest.

- 2012 will be a key year for new product: Vauxhall Ampera, Chevrolt Volt, Toyota Prius Plug-in, Toyota Yaris hybrid and Volvo V60 diesel plug-in hybrid.

- Which? Car is already evolving its test program for exciting times ahead!