

CAR CHOICE

A Minor way to save the world



Ultimate eco option: restorer Charles Ware with a Morris Minor convertible in 1977
CARL BRUIN/DAILY MIRROR

Thierry is thinking about changing his car, a Rover 45 that has had a lot of problems mechanically. Thierry has also been troubled by the 168g/km, which he says he calculated on David Cameron's website. He wants to go greener, reducing the size and consumption of his car, but it needs to be a proper one that is comfy, rather than something electric. Thierry isn't bothered about the brand and just wants to save the planet, provided doing so doesn't cost more than £10,000.

Manufacture is a massive source of CO₂ emissions. Keep a small car for a long time to be truly green, says James Ruppert



cian's website. However, if Thierry wants to drive a less polluting car to save the planet, then that's his business. I can't argue with the underlying aim, which is also to save money by making the fuel go further.

My own green philosophy, as expounded in *Bangernomics*, published in 1993, was that the ultimate form of green motoring is to recycle an old car. The amount of environmental damage caused by buying a brand-new car is very much reduced by buying older. Indeed, many so-called green cars, after they have been imported from the other side of the world (just think of the energy expended doing that) have

a limited lifespan anyway, as the technology (batteries) has a limited lifespan.

Not so green then, although there are some small-engined petrol cars and also many diesels that deliver remarkable mpg figures. The key for maximum greenness, especially when buying new, is to keep the vehicle for as long a possible.

A CAR FOR THE HEAD

Thierry told me that I haven't mentioned the VW Polo BlueMotion, but I am happy to do so. It will return 72mpg overall and has a dashboard display that makes you feel guilty when idling, switching from miles per gallon to gallons per hour. A new one, however, will be well over £11,000 and the next best Polo diesel, the 1.4 TDI, delivers just over 60mpg and is around £10,700 new.

Thierry could buy a used one, however, and I found a 2004

one example with 40,000 miles at £6,400.

I'll presume that a Smart Fortwo is a bit too small, as trading down from a five-seater to a two- might be a drop too far down the motoring scale. Even so, the Smart is cheap to run, will return 60mpg and in pollution terms it dishes out only 113g/km CO₂.

But I would also like Thierry to consider a Morris Minor. Last made in 1971, first launched in 1948, here is the ultimate green car that has been given a new lease of life by pioneers

such as Charles Ware (see picture). You can update the Minor with larger engines

Fresh and funky: C1 from Citroën

and disc brakes, but the basic structure is very durable and working on one is simple, so running costs are marginal. All parts are available and prices start at £3,000 for a solid one.

A CAR FOR THE HEART

When I think frugal and green these days, I can't help coming up with Citroën. That's not surprising, considering that for the second year running, the company has picked up the Manufacturer prize in the Green Fleet awards.

In particular, the C1 in both 1.0i petrol and 1.4Hdi diesel forms returns ultra-low CO₂ emissions of 109g/km as well as over 60mpg on the official combined cycle. The C1 is cheap to buy and run and Thierry shouldn't worry about going for the diesel as the 1.0 petrol is just as efficient and, most importantly, cheaper, at £6,995 compared with £8,825 for the HDi model.

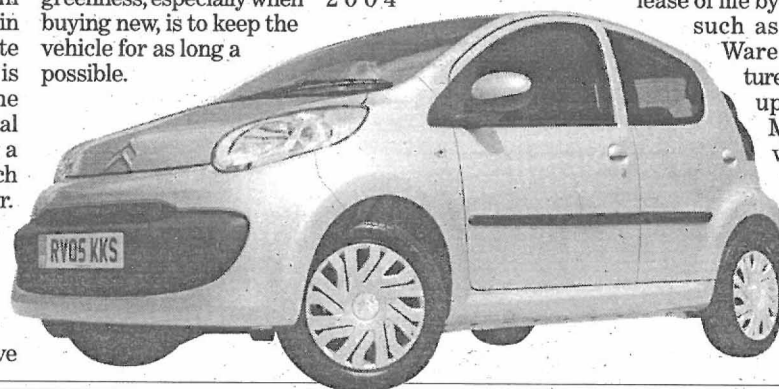
There is also the Toyota

Aggo and the Peugeot 107, which are broadly the same cars. I think the C1 looks the most interesting, in a funky and fresh way. It isn't the largest car in the world, but you can just about seat four.

On long journeys it will sound a bit noisy, but Thierry should think about the money and planet he is saving. The three door Vibe has a CD and MP3 player and that should be more than enough specification. Thierry might prefer to go for the five-door model for its added practicality.

CAR CHOICE

Please write to Car Choice, Features, Independent House, 191 Marsh Wall, London E14 9RS, or email James Ruppert at car-choice@independent.co.uk, giving your age, address and phone number, details of the type of vehicle in which you are interested and budget.



LAST CHANCE TO BUY

VOLKSWAGEN TOUAREG

When's it going?

The Touareg has been replaced by a new version, though you could be forgiven for failing to spot the changes. At the front it does look a bit different, but it is under the skin that the majority of updates have taken place. According to Volkswagen, it has changed 2,300 individual parts in the new Touareg, including brakes, suspension, anti-rollover safety, and a front and side sensor system that tells you how much room you have (or haven't) got in tricky off-road situations, or in the superstore car park.

What's good about it?

It's the working bloke's version of the Porsche Cayenne, and is big, plush and comfy, both on the road and off it. Developed alongside the Porsche, it is a fine effort as the company's first ever off-roader. Whereas the Cayenne was

tuned for performance, the Touareg is all about comfort, and is a good compromise between decent on-road performance and ability off it. It drives sharply, which means that it is really just like a very large car.

It is massive, so inside there is masses of room, plus a suitably huge and well-shaped boot - five people and their luggage can easily be accommodated. There is a wide range of engines, and the V6 petrols are well rated for being strong and smooth. Diesels offer more miles per gallon but noticeably less refinement. Equipment levels are fine, with climate control and cruise control. There are plenty of safety devices, with twin front, side and full-length curtain airbags.

For the driver, there's an adjustable seat and steering column, and all-round visibility is fine. For those who reckon that a Range Rover is too vulgar, here's a good alternative.

What's bad about it?

It's a 4x4, and a large one at that, which these days equates to pure evil. Even if you love cars, it is possible still to feel less than positive about a vehicle that is so large, yet only seats five. At least the V12 version has not been imported here, or there might be rioting in the streets: it can tow a Boeing 747, according to one recent press stunt, which is always useful. The running costs, whichever model is bought, are certainly



jumbo-sized. Fuel consumption on, say, the 4.2 V8 petrol is 19mpg, but then again, the V6 only just cracks 20mpg, whilst the diesel manages just 28.8mpg. For some people, £50,000 is a lot of money to pay for a VW, especially as the depreciation curve is quite sharp.

How much?

It has been possible to save £2,000-£3,000 via a broker on a new model, but it is also possible to find private owners with good-value examples. I found one such - a 2006 Volkswagen Touareg 2.5 TDI SE that had covered just over 9,000 miles and was loaded with every possible extra, including leather and sat nav - for £27,950, when the retail price would have been at least £33,000. Volkswagen dealers can save money on the biggest diesel, the magnificently over-the-top 5.0 V8 TDI. An 8,700 mile example from 2006, which would have cost around

£54,000 new, was on offer at Sidlow in Horsham (0845 0203561) for £42,950.

Any snags?

There have been two recalls that affected the Touaregs built in the first year, to do with faulty wiring and rear seat belts. Overall, though, owners report that all problems, usually electrical, have been addressed under warranty. So it seems to have a good solid reputation so far.

specifications

Launched: 2003
Engine sizes: 2.5TDI, 3.0 V6, 3.2 V6, 4.2 V8, 5.0 V10
Performance: 2.5 TDi top speed 114mph, 0-60mph 13.3 seconds
Economy: 28.8mpg
Safety: NCAP: 5 stars