



LEX AUTOLEASE

CASE STUDY: UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM LEX AUTOLEASE SUPPORTS UNIVERSITY'S ENVIRONMENTAL DRIVE

When the University of Birmingham wanted to make its vehicles more environmentally friendly, it had the perfect profile for an electric fleet. Working closely with Lex Autolease, the University was able to benefit from cost-efficiencies when moving to electric, while marking an industry first by leasing a hydrogen-fuel-cell car.

THE OBJECTIVE

As the fourth largest university in the United Kingdom, the University of Birmingham requires a substantial fleet. Approximately 7,000 staff and 35,000 students occupy 200 buildings spread across three separate sites, and they all need to be supplied with goods and services. "We operate similar to a small town or council," says Monica Guise, Sustainable Logistics Manager for the University of Birmingham.

"We have a diverse fleet ranging from small commercial vehicles for our maintenance, security and postal teams to large refrigerated lorries to manage our 22 different catering outlets across the campus. Some of our vehicles form part of complex UK-wide research projects, while the remainder are used to manage the huge facility and IT operations across campus."

Most of the vehicles in the 98-strong fleet operate within a five-mile radius of the campus, so tend to only cover short distances. Monica notes that although a handful of the University's cars are used for long trips, "90% of our vehicles do less than 5,000 miles per year." As a result, the University were in a prime position to support the city of Birmingham's Clean Air Zone proposition by minimising its diesel fleet and replacing it with lower emitting vehicles wherever possible. Monica was also worried about the impact on the health of the drivers from the particles and emissions given off by diesel engines when driven at low speed, as well as the overall environmental impact of driving diesel vehicles.

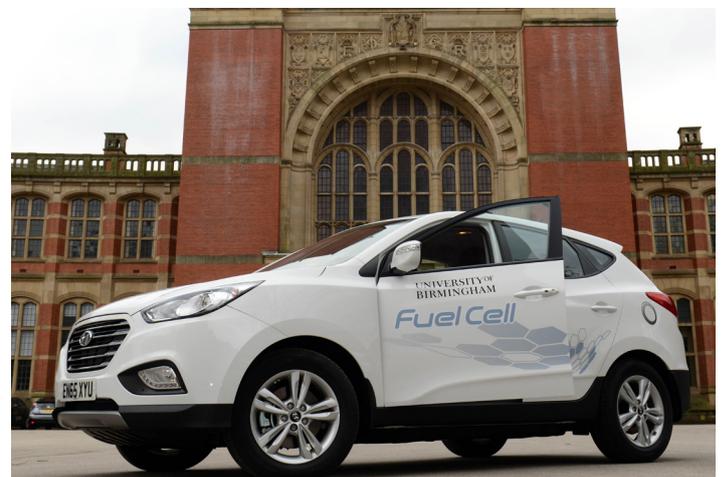
The University originally invested in electric vehicles 10 years ago when the technology was still in its infancy, but Monica found the vans unreliable and expensive. She needed a more financially efficient way to support her ambitions of a more electric and greener fleet. She also had a more unique project in mind.

"Monica is very well known in the industry for her focus on greener fleets," says Claire Haury, the Lex Autolease Customer Relationship Manager for Midlands and the North. "She approached us first to discuss electric vans, but then had dialogue with our consultancy team to see what kind of appetite we might have for a hydrogen vehicle."

At the time, the University of Birmingham had the only hydrogen fuelling station in the Midlands – but it didn't have a hydrogen-fuel-cell car on campus. Monica was therefore keen

to obtain a hydrogen-powered vehicle. This would not just back the University's focus on the environment, but help support their academics interested in researching the viability of hydrogen as a key transportation fuel for the future.

Hyundai was one of the few manufacturers to offer hydrogen-fuel-cell technology, and Monica found that they were keen to promote their new vehicle. With Lex Autolease willing to discuss the funding of the vehicle, the three organisations worked closely to discuss how the vehicle could be successfully incorporated within the University's fleet. This included the make-up of the maintenance agreement and what safety procedures would be needed when refuelling. It ensured the project had a very real chance of becoming a reality.



TYPE OF COMPANY:

University

LEX AUTOLEASE SERVICE:

Managed fleet on a sole supplier basis. Includes vehicle leasing and full maintenance agreements.

SIZE OF FLEET:

98 vehicles, with a mix of diesel, electric and hydrogen-fuel-cell cars and vans. Includes 28 electric vehicles and one hydrogen fueled car.

THE SOLUTION

To support the University's general focus on the environment, Monica worked with the engineering team at Lex Autolease to order a range of electric vehicles that would comprise 28% of the fleet. These electric cars and vans were converted to fit specific requirements, adding racking, tail lifts and other bespoke kit so that each vehicle was fit for purpose. Monica was pleased with the range of vehicles on offer: "Lex Autolease was the first company to offer leasing on the Nissan e-NV200," she recalls, "which together with the introduction of the Renault Kangoo and Nissan Leaf was a real game changer."

The switch to electric brought financial dividends as well as environmental gains. Monica says that the University of Birmingham's fuel costs have dropped by 15% since the electric vehicles arrived. And because of the leasing agreement, she doesn't have to worry about the vehicles' residual value.

Maintenance has also been far easier with the electric fleet. "We have less downtime with our electric vehicles compared to when they were diesels," says Monica. "Fewer things go wrong with them, and when they do go wrong, it's usually quick to repair them."

Monica also found that although many of her drivers initially had negative preconceptions about electric vehicles, they have now embraced the technology whole-heartedly. "It has reached a point where if we were to tell them that they're getting a new vehicle, they'd ask for the electric one," says Monica.

Monica also cites the financial support from Lex Autolease as the biggest reason she was able to achieve her goal of going electric. "You see a lot of fleet managers not taking that leap forward because they say it's an expensive mistake. But actually, because we've got the backing of Lex Autolease, we know we're going to be all right."

The hydrogen car has "been a great success for all of us", she adds. Monica worked closely with Chris Chandler, Principal Consultant within Lex Autolease to make the hydrogen project happen, and she was delighted with his enthusiasm for it. "Chris' knowledge is second to none. When we looked at the hydrogen vehicle project, he was instrumental to getting that off the ground."

Claire notes that the hydrogen-fuel-cell car gets taken to events to advertise the University and its green credentials – so as well as being useful for research, it has been an excellent way to promote the University of Birmingham.

"Working with Lex Autolease has been such a successful partnership," says Monica. "Ultimately Lex Autolease benefited from that partnership, because they can publicise being the first company to lease a hydrogen-fuel-cell vehicle and use their experiences from doing so."

Monica has been working with Lex Autolease since 2013, and she envisages their partnership extending well into the future as she

pursues her goal of an ever greener fleet. "Our aspiration is that by 2020, 40% of the vehicles will be fully electric or ULEV. We've just taken on a couple of hybrid vehicles, we're consistently looking at the CO2 and how we can reduce it, and we expect Lex Autolease to be with us still in 2020, continuing with their great work."

OUTCOMES

- Fuel savings of 15% as a result of switching 28% of the fleet to electric vehicles.
- Far less vehicle downtime as a result of switching to electric vehicles.
- Annual CO2 emissions reduced by 30.9 tonnes.
- First hydrogen-fuel-cell car to be leased in the United Kingdom.

TESTIMONIALS

"Lex Autolease allowed us to take big steps forward in terms of environmental policies"

Monica Guise, Sustainable Logistics Manager,
University of Birmingham

"It was Lex Autolease that was Monica's first thought when she had this project in mind. She very much values what we bring to the table and the level of experience that we've got."

Claire Haury, Customer Relationship Manager – Midlands & North
Lex Autolease

A Managed Fleet

The University of Birmingham receives a service that is tailored to help them meet their specific fleet needs. They receive the benefit of a dedicated Account Management team and can choose from a full range of fleet management services to match their vehicle ambitions.

To find out more, contact our dedicated Fleet Consultancy team

email: fleetconsultancy@lexautolease.co.uk
visit: lexautolease.co.uk