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WINE MERCHANTS ENJOY THE TASTE OF PRIUS



Wine Merchants enjoy the taste of Prius
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In 1999 the head of the UK's leading independent wine importer switched from an 18mpg executive car to the 65mpg Prius, reckoning the potential savings in fuel, tax, insurance combined with the exemption from the London congestion charge would save him £5000 a year....he was not wrong, and it's got even better!

Keith Calnan, the Deputy Chairman of Berkmann Wine Cellars has since been driving the new 65mpg Prius and coupled with the £40 a week congestion charge is now saving over £6000 a year. There are 65 cars in the Berkmann

fleet and Mr Calnan was so impressed by the Prius that he offered all those staff driving to work in London the option to go hybrid. Many are now doing so as their car leases come up for renewal.

Berkmann Wine Cellars, a shipper and wholesaler with a turnover in excess of £45 million, selling top wines, as exclusive agents, for renowned producers such as Georges Duboeuf, Antinori, Norton, Santa Rita and Deutz champagne is based in Islington, north London and has regional branches in Chippenham, Edinburgh, Plymouth and York. Two-thirds of its business is with the hotel and restaurant trade and the rest with the supermarkets and major off-licence outlets. The fleet also includes 25 light commercial vehicles.

The Toyota Prius are contract hired on three year terms, covering average annual mileages of around 20,000. Two of the sales team came on board immediately with the older style Prius, but the broader appeal of the replacement model has helped more of the staff to decide to switch, according to Berkmann's Fleet Manager Eddie Roda.

"It's a completely different car", he says. "The new shape and the actual drive quality of the latest version have helped a lot." And he is happy to report that the shift to Prius has been trouble-free: "We've had no problems at all, and driver satisfaction is 100%."

Now the Berkmann Wine Cellars policy is moving beyond the capital. "One reason we drive the Prius in London is the exemption from the congestion charge, but one of the staff at our Wiltshire branch now has one too, so we hope to be expanding their use to the other branches as well," says Mr Roda. "It's proving to be a money-saver all round."