

## WELCOME

# STEP ON THE GAS

**TONIO DARMANIN EDITOR**

**U**sing gas as an alternative fuel is becoming more and more popular. Since the first installations about a year ago, the numbers are growing steadily as is the volume of gas being distributed at the three stations that are equipped to supply vehicles with LPG.

This increase is due to a number of reasons. First of all, the fear of the unknown is gradually being overcome as more people take the bold step and change to LPG. And if they are happy with their decision, they

discuss the benefits with family and friends and act as ambassadors.

The primary benefit is obviously financial. The installation costs, on average, €1,200 but this depends on the type of car and the quality of the kit you choose to have installed in your vehicle. This will invariably be equated to the level of savings you can achieve over a period of time to calculate whether the exercise is viable or not.

The first initiative is that the Government will subsidise this installation and will contribute €200 towards it. Another initiative is that, since the installation and use of LPG will drastically reduce a car's emissions, you stand to gain from a reduction in circulation tax as the car's stated emission level is reduced by 10 per cent. This might bring you down to a lower bracket and hence a smaller contribution.

Finally you stand to save on fuel costs. It seems to be an accepted fact that the actual level of consumption will remain consistent whether you are using petrol or LPG. However, what will vary is the price you pay to fill your tank. Gas is roughly half the

price of petrol so effectively you could be reducing your fuel bill by half. Naturally the more mileage you cover, the bigger the savings.

There are a number of limitations. First of all, LPG for cars is only distributed from three stations in Luqa, St Andrews and limits of Rabat. Although this does cause some inconvenience, you don't need to worry that if you run out of gas your car will stop and you will be stranded. These cars work in a way that they start up on petrol and after a few seconds they switch to gas. If the gas finishes, the car will automatically switch back to petrol and the trip will proceed unhindered.

The amount of LPG on board is another consideration. Since this is an aftermarket installation, the size and location of the cylinder is an issue. The most common design is in the shape of a wheel and intended to fit in the place of the spare wheel. This is the least intrusive but obviously the capacity is somewhat limited. Larger cylinders exist but these will have to be installed in the luggage, taking up space accordingly.

Regarding safety, the tank itself is

of massive construction certified to withstand substantial impact. Moreover, the entire system is fitted with numerous cut-out devices to ensure there is no escape or leakage.

I had a chat with Adrian Montanaro who has carried out over 100 conversions and he claims that there is no typical vehicle on which this system is more popular – he has seen a bit of everything. When we spoke he was working on a Japanese imported Vitz with an automatic gearbox but I also know of a Porsche Cayenne that was converted to LPG and there should soon be a high power BMW X5 that runs on LPG.

At the moment, this conversion is available on petrol engines but there will soon be developments for diesel engines. This should be of particular interest for high mileage commercial vehicles. There is also some progress regarding petrol driven marine engines. Watch this space.

This editorial is being posted on Facebook – **Tonio Darmanin Paqpaq** – where we invite you to comment on the issues raised. Also feel free to email us your thoughts and opinions on **tonio@paqpaq.tv** •