



Would you believe it, the C5 was actually developed by Lotus?



The C5's headlamp comprises a 12v 5W bulb, a bit low by today's standards.

With the C5 being an electric vehicle, that means it's battery-powered. With the battery fully-charged, the C5 has a range of about 20 miles (depending on load). And, owing to the weight and size of the machine (depending on load once again) it can be quite difficult to pedal – yep, the C5 has pedals so, if the battery runs out, at least you can pedal your way home...

Push-button technology

So what's the C5 actually like to ride/drive? Well, given that you're sitting so low to the ground, speed is a bit of an illusion, at times you actually feel as though you're going quicker than 15mph, believe it or not. The motor itself responds to the push of a button situated under a rubber moulding on the left handgrip. And, to slow the C5 down, you simply release the button, or use the brake levers. After a while, though, your thumb starts to ache ('what a wimp') after pushing the button for prolonged periods of time. Pedalling the C5 can get tiring too ('no, you're just unfit'), particularly uphill. I wouldn't recommend the C5 to anyone who's asthmatic!

It wasn't without its mechanical problems. Clicking sounds coming from the motor were quite common, and this could be put down to the drive belt slipping. Pushing the C5 backwards didn't do much good to the electrics either. In fact, most of the problems with the C5 related to the electrics.

As for the build quality, the C5 is a little bit flimsy mechanically. Well, it was built in the mid-1980s. But the bodywork itself is quite robust, being made out of moulded polypropylene. Back



No, the canister in the integral boot isn't a bomb, it's an original Sinclair toolkit. There's space for a few cans o' Special Brew in there, though...

in the 80s Sinclair claimed this to be the largest injection-moulded polypropylene assembly ever to go into mass production. The streamlined bodywork is also the result of wind tunnel testing, so for all its failings at least some attempt was made to make the vehicle aerodynamic. Oh, and did I mention the C5 was developed with the help of Lotus? Well, didn't they keep that quiet?

Worth a mention are the exploits of Adam Harper, who actually helped design the C5. Adam has also been an authorised C5 dealer from 1985 right up to the present day. Along with giving the C5 his support, he has taken the C5 pretty much to the max, would you believe! What he's gone and done is set three electric land speed records, taking a C5 from its original top speed of 15mph to a storming 150mph, along with a 0-60mph time of five seconds. That's one fettle C5 all right! In addition to all this, Adam has also performed the world's first electric vehicle stunt, by driving a C5 through a 70ft tunnel of fire... The dare devil!

Back to reality

One of the C5s pictured in this feature belongs to diehard Sinclair enthusiast Graham Motuel from West Sussex. Graham's C5 is about as good as you're gonna get for a 20-year-old machine. It's in damned good condition considering its age, and features a number of original Sinclair accessories including wing mirrors, a 'High-Vis Mast', indicators and C5 mudflaps. Graham also tells us that his C5 has been serviced by Adam Harper at Sinclair Research, which is a bit of a claim to fame as far as Sinclair C5 ownership goes. The only other additional feature that's unique to Graham's C5 is



The C5's instrument pod comprises two LED bar graphs to show the motor load (left-hand side), and battery level (right-hand side).



A C5 sales brochure.

