

Stelios wants you to join his club and rent out your car

David Robertson

Two of Britain's most successful entrepreneurs have teamed up to launch a company that will encourage members of the public to rent their cars to strangers.

Sir **Stelios Haji-Ioannou** and Brent Hoberman, the co-founder of last-minute.com, said yesterday that their venture would offer peer-to-peer vehicle leasing.

Car Club will tap into a business trend that uses the internet and smartphones to broker transactions between individuals. In this case, people will make their family vehicles available for rent when they are not being used and will earn an income from doing so.

Car Club will operate alongside a traditional car rental business called easyCar that is owned by Sir Stelios, the founder of easyJet.

When people sign up to Car Club, they can set the hourly rental price for their vehicle and its availability. The car will be given an automatic entry and tracking system and will be unlocked remotely for the renter. Insurance will be provided by Car Club and the renter will pay for fuel.

According to Sir Stelios: "Rather than

having to buy the cars to be rented and pay ownership costs, this business model relies on the fact that there are plenty of underused cars on the road already and that is lazy capital that can be put to work again."

Mr Hoberman and his PROfounders venture capital group are investing an unspecified amount in easyCar and will join the company's board. They will use easyCar as a portal for attracting customers to Car Club, much as traditional car rental companies do. Sir Stelios said yesterday that it was possible that easyCar could become a dedicated peer-to-peer leaser in the future.

The model is based on Airbnb.com, a website that offers accommodation in private homes rather than hotels.

Mr Hoberman, left, said: "Car Club is a compelling customer proposition that will leverage the power of smartphones to enable consumers to save money and time. Car owners make money wherever they are and renters find cheaper, more local rental alternatives.

"This business will benefit both the environment and people's pockets — it's the right moment to launch this in 2012."

