

Power to the people

A county-wide electric vehicle infrastructure for Cumbria



Organisation	Sector	Number of vehicles	Vehicle type
Cumbria County Council	Local authority	660 plus 3,280 owned by employees and driven for work	Cars, vans and trucks.

The challenge – to introduce electric vehicles to the Council’s fleet and create a shared infrastructure for the people of Cumbria.

With support from the Energy Saving Trust, Cumbria County Council is about to introduce electric vehicles to its car pool. This has proven to be the catalyst for a large infrastructure project that will see 36 electric charging stations installed across the county. As well as serving the Council’s fleet, the charging points will provide ‘power to the people’ at highly competitive rates, making the switch to electric vehicles a viable option for Cumbria’s residents, businesses and visitors.

Recommendations

As part of the Plugged-in Fleets Initiative, the Energy Saving Trust completed a review to assess the potential of electric vehicles for Cumbria County Council. Seeing opportunities to secure carbon and cost reductions, the Council decided to introduce 15 electric cars to its pool fleet. However, there was a stumbling block. There were only four vehicle charging points across the whole county. Without a structured approach to electric vehicle charging for the county, the Council – and everyone else in Cumbria – would be locked out of the benefits of electric driving.

Cumbria County Council and the Energy Saving Trust found a visionary solution. They applied for an infrastructure grant from the Office for Low Emission Vehicles to give the Council and the county the infrastructure it needed. “We saw that we could kick-start an electric vehicle revolution in Cumbria,” says Suzanne Pender, the Council’s Travel Improvement Manager, “and we set to work to make it happen.”

Making it happen

Securing the grant funding depended on winning public and private sector support across the county. Suzanne and the Energy Saving Trust Fleet Consultant, Helen Moore, succeeded in uniting all six of Cumbria’s District Councils plus Sellafield, the county’s largest private employer, and Britain’s Energy Coast, a Cumbria-based energy innovation organisation, behind the bid. “This was a real achievement. It really helped that the Energy Saving Trust had created the business case; robust and independent, it gave everyone the confidence to come on board,” says Suzanne.

With £1 million of funding secured, the charging points will be installed by the end of 2014 and the Council’s new electric cars will take to the road in early 2015.

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Results

“It’s great news for the Council,” says Suzanne. “We estimate that this first step will reduce pool car CO₂ emissions by around 24 tonnes and reduce our cost per mile – currently 35 pence for pool cars and 45 or 50 pence for employees using their own vehicles – to only 20 pence.” More gains will come as Cumbria County Council accelerates its adoption of electric vehicles. “We’re already thinking about other areas of the fleet that could switch,” says Suzanne.

The gains for the Council are significant, but the ripple effect will be immense. The Council will provide electric vehicle charging to the public on a not-for-profit basis, charging only what is required to cover costs and maintain the infrastructure. “Now every individual, business and organisation in Cumbria can consider the potential of electric vehicles” says Suzanne.

Results summary

For the Council

- ✔ Pool car fleet carbon emissions reduced by 24 tonnes
- ✔ Price per mile reduction of up to 60 per cent

For the county

- ✔ A comprehensive, low-price electric vehicle charging infrastructure

“Energy Saving Trust has helped us realise a vision that will benefit the whole of Cumbria. By accelerating the adoption of electric vehicles within the Council and across the county we’re unlocking vast potential for carbon reduction and economic benefit for individuals and businesses alike. Energy Saving Trust’s impartiality, commitment and hard work has allowed us to turn a modest initiative into a truly transformative project.”

**Suzanne Pender, Travel Improvement Manager,
Cumbria County Council**

To apply to receive analysis and advice on plug-in vehicles for your organisation, visit our website www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/Organisations/Transport

or contact transportadvice@est.org.uk



Office for
Low Emission
Vehicles



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