

Local authority EV forum Discussion summary

Implementing EV Plans – DNOs, TROs, Data and more

3 December 2021



Local Government Support Programme

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1. Introduction

Energy Saving Trust hosts local authority EV forums, in partnership with the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV). The aim of the forum is to help local authority officers to find answers to their questions and share their experience with others working on public chargepoint delivery.

Our first forum was held on 5 October 2021, which we focused on chargepoint procurement and funding. The feedback from that forum helped shape the second forum (3 December 2021) around Implementing EV infrastructure plans. Over 50 local authority officers attended, and our last session saw a 18% increase in the number of local authorities attending (up from 46 to 52 attendees).

At each forum, an OZEV representative provided an update and we asked people to take part in some quick polls. We then split attendees into smaller break-out rooms to cover a wide range of topics. This summary report is to reflect the discussions from these sessions.

Our next forum will be in February 2022. Officers are invited to join a MS Teams group to continue the discussion (email lgsp@est.org.uk for more details). Alternatively, you can sign up to our Local Authority Alert newsletter, which can be found here <https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/service/local-government-support-programme>.

For a copy of our last forum report please click here: <https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/service/resources-for-local-authorities-on-electric-vehicle-chargepoints/>

2. Polls

At our last forum we asked where local authorities were with procuring chargepoints, in which over 40% had awarded a contract and another quarter of local authorities were working on another tender.

This forum explored how councils are progressing with their installations by starting with three quick polls in which we had 55 active participants. It was clear that although many councils (55%) are either progressing well with their EV strategies or well on their way to installing chargepoints, 41% are just starting or beginning their EV journey. Some councils are struggling to progress plans/strategies due to a number of issues ranging from lack of resources to deliver or develop strategies/ projects, to capital funding, high DNO costs, lack of EV knowledge and sites with no connection. Find stats from our polls below:

Figure 1 - Where do you feel you are at the moment with chargepoint installations? (45 responses)

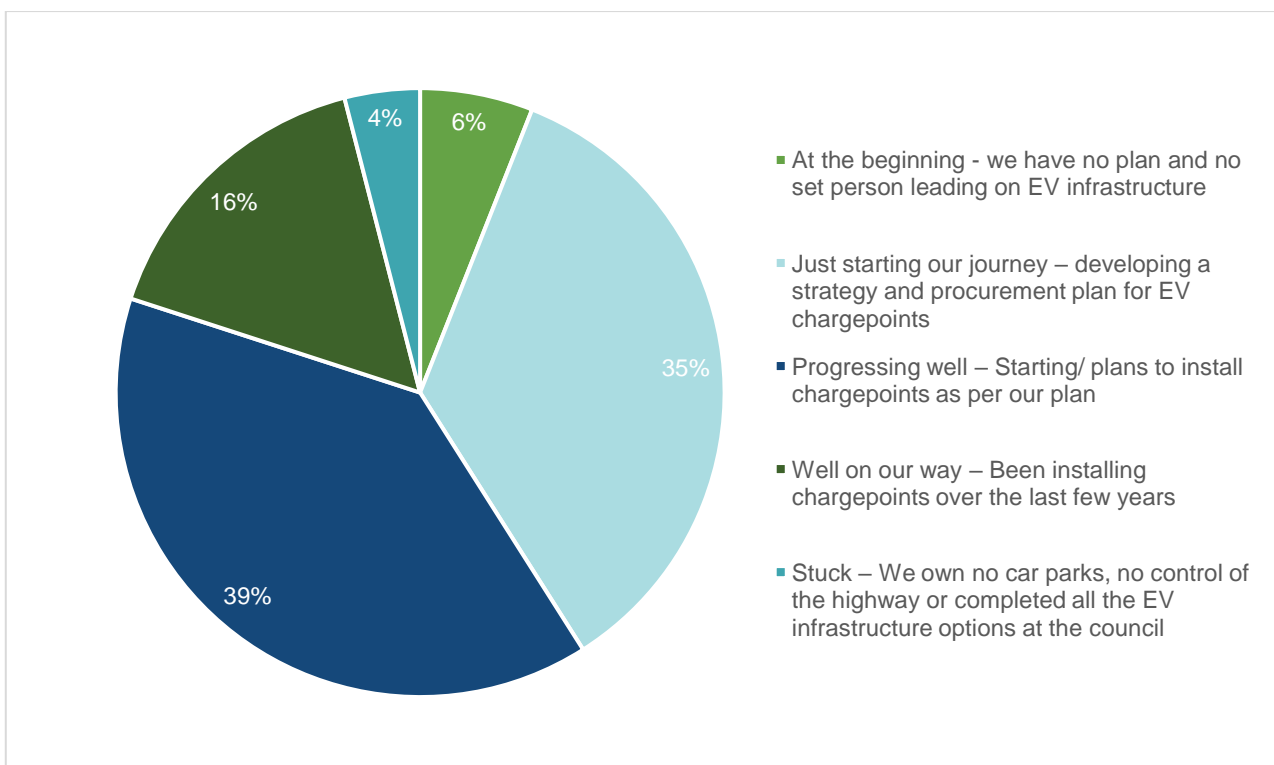
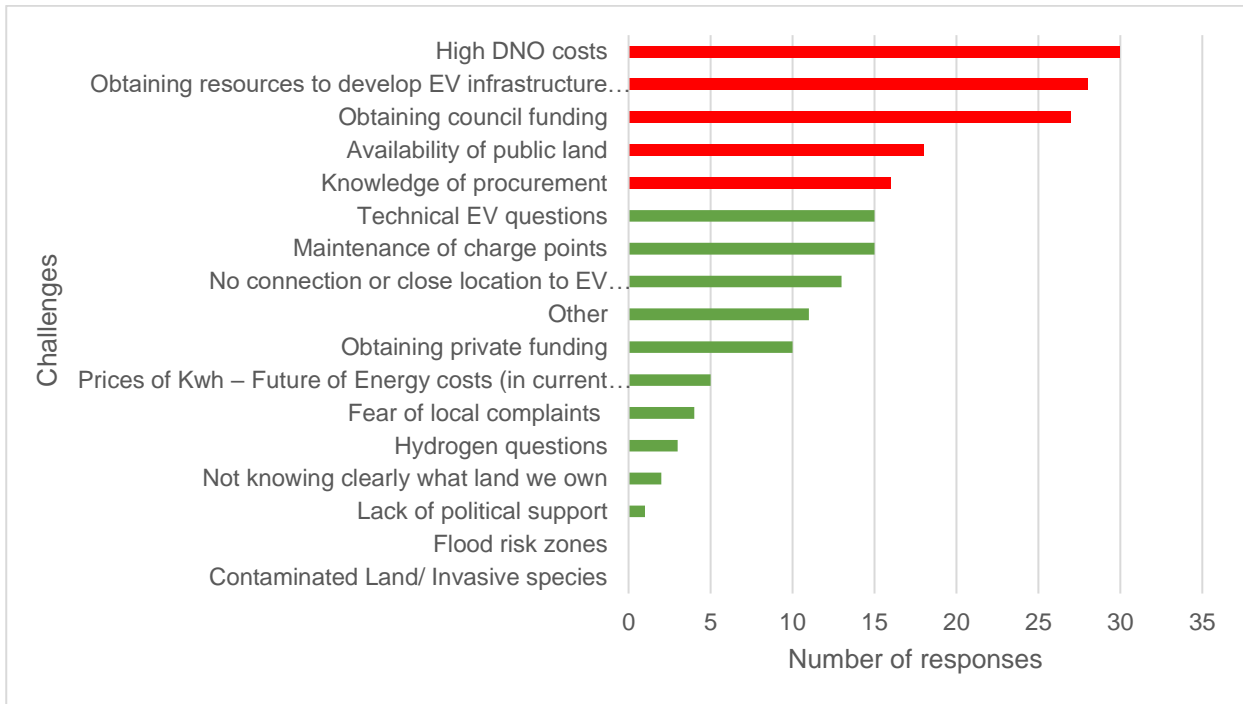


Figure 2 - In relation to installing EV infrastructure, choose the top 5 challenges you face (47 responses)



3. Summary of the breakout rooms

We held five breakout rooms, in which each breakout started with a different theme, with an aim to cover as many topics but allowed attendees to choose which sessions they wanted to start with. The topics were:

1. Engaging with Distribution Network Operators (DNOs) and reducing connections costs
2. Implementing Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) & building resident and political support
3. Infrastructure provision in rural areas and cross-boundary collaboration
4. Managing chargepoint point data, tariffs, KPIs & SLAs.

3.1. Engaging with DNOs and reducing connections costs

Attendees discussed their relationships with their DNOs and the challenges that they have experienced. The main issues raised were:

- High DNO costs impacting EV infrastructure delivery
- Challenges of delivering EV infrastructure at more than one site at a time
- Lack of resources to provide support at a large scale
- Supply problems with construction, contractors and charge points
- Difficulty finding a single point of contact at the DNO
- Chargepoint operators being main contact with the DNO

High DNO costs

High DNO Costs were the most cited challenge, impacting site selection, chargepoint installation and sourcing funding. Several authorities explained some of the options they have explored to reduce EV connection costs, please find examples in Table 1 below.

Despite the challenges identified, several authorities spoke about how they have developed a positive relationship with their DNO. For example, UKPN delivered a number of workshops in the South East, to engage local authorities. Norfolk County Council found these workshops enabled them to directly feed into UKPN's next five-year business cycle and to start exploring joint working, in terms of streamlined projects. Similarly, West Sussex County Council found their DNO to be very proactive in engaging with them to understand their future plans for EV charging infrastructure.

Several authorities from the Midlands and the South West spoke about being invited to have a conversation with their DNO about future planning for local energy. WPD’s [‘Green Recovery Map’](#) was mentioned by South Gloucestershire, and detailed how useful this tool is for planning.

Table 1 – Examples of how councils have reduced connection costs		
York City Council	Norfolk County Council	Dorset Council
A site with grid constraints (50-60% of power required) is using on-site energy storage and PV to bolster the grid connection.	Exploring a residential hub model similar to Oxfordshire County Council which could include battery storage to assist where grid connections are an issue.	Potential of exploring flywheel technology for charging stations as a potential solution for rural locations

Suggestions for engaging more productively with DNOS included:

- Inviting DNOs to regular meetings to encourage informal conversation ahead of formal applications
- Trying to identify a single point of contact at the DNO because it makes a difference to your relationship
- Asking your DNO to create an Auto Design Tool, similar to that offered by Northern Powergrid to give you more accurate cost estimates in order to improve the site selection process and application success rate (Leeds City Council)
- Working with consultancies to help with site selection ahead of submitting applications to DNOs (South Gloucestershire Council) but noting that some offer free support (Midlands Connect)
- Engaging with your DNO as early as possible ahead of applications because they are currently dealing with a high volume of requests.

Working with Neighbouring Authorities

Authorities highlighted the benefits of working with neighbouring councils, as it can help improve chargepoint infrastructure for residents and increases the viability of being able to own EVs. This was expressed by South Kesteven District Council who are working with five other local authorities across Lincolnshire. West Sussex County Council found that though it took 18 months to procure a solution with county and district partners, they felt it will provide a better, unified solution in the long-term.

3.2. Implementing TROs & building resident and political support

During the discussions around implementing TROs, there was discussion on their impact on implementation and delivery of charging infrastructure. This included:

- The time-consuming consultation process
- The overall timescales are seen as an impediment (e.g. 18-month process for South Gloucestershire Council)
- Private operators saying they will fully fund capital costs but refusing to cover TRO costs
- TROs being viewed as too problematic to install because of high demand for parking and concerns around enforcement
- Concerns around trailing cables
- Requirement of TROs is putting authorities off applying for ORCS funding
- Concerns about the political implications of installation and potential public rejection and pushback

Car Blocking

Car Blocking is a concern for some local authorities, this is where a vehicle is used to obstruct an EV wishing to use an on-street charging location. Where councils raised this as a concern most advocated for TROs to be implemented. However, other authorities, where car blocking is not a concern, feel that the requirement of a TRO is acting as a hurdle to the delivery of infrastructure and ORCS funding.

Trailing cables

It seems that most local authorities do not permit trailing cables on the highway.

Hampshire County Council has comprehensive [guidelines](#) on what they will and won't allow their residents to do on their website. Bracknell Forest Borough Council don't advocate trailing cables across the footway, but, if there's no alternative, they ensure that there is a cable protector to avoid a trip hazard, ensure they have public liability insurance and that the council also have the right to inspect the cable.

Equal and inclusivity of EV infrastructure

Different authorities also spoke about making the roll out of EV infrastructure equal and inclusive. Bracknell Forest Borough Council ensures that making chargepoints easily accessible is at the forefront of all discussions with suppliers. Norfolk County Council worked with UKPN to look at streets that spanned different socio-economic areas and chose areas for chargepoints that would benefit the wider community and make EVs viable for all. Dorset voiced their frustration

about not being able to apply for ORCS funding for prime location car parks which they manage and regulate but don't own. They feel this is a barrier to providing infrastructure that serves the entire community.

Several suggestions for long-term planning to improve implementation and public support:

- Producing national guidance on a simplified way to approach TRO delivery
- Strengthening local authority rules on planning and land use could be an effective way to deliver chargepoints e.g. non-residential landowners have to install charge points
- Focusing on making charging accessible, but encourage people to shift from car use
- Using resident surveys to gauge parking pressures to target TROs in some areas
- Continuing to consult with people locally after a TRO has been implemented to make sure they are aware of its location

3.3. Infrastructure provision in rural areas and cross-boundary collaboration

Some local authorities spoke about specific challenges which are impacting infrastructure provision in rural areas. Below is a breakdown of some of the challenges that rural areas face:

Table 2 – Rural challenges faced by councils to deliver EV infrastructure		
Dorset County Council	Norfolk County Council	Bristol City Council
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Villages that have nowhere to put on-street chargepoints • Have lots of community spaces that would be perfect, however, they don't meet ORCS criteria • Conservation areas that restrict modern chargepoint infrastructure. Increasing costs and reducing EV viability in those locations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grid cannot accommodate fast chargepoints in some rural locations • Restricted on retrofitting streetlights due to an existing PFI arrangement and relocating lighting columns to the back of the footway. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has historic issues with their highway team, but this is changing over time and now proactively trying to find creative solutions in rural areas.

However, Norfolk County Council detailed how parish council owned lampposts may be a potential option for them going forward due to their streetlight constraints and they are hiring an EV project officer to support the transition to electric.

3.4. Managing chargepoint point data, tariffs, KPIs & SLAs

Managing Charge Point Data

When discussing managing chargepoint data, Bristol City Council explained that their charge point operator is the data controller. They have access to a dashboard system which provides lots of data on the charge point utilisation but no access to personal identification data. They are currently working on having access to data which will help with managing faults.

Tariffs, KPIs & SLAs

West Sussex County Council mentioned that they use a concession model. They explained that the downside to this option is that they don't have control over the tariffs. They have tried to

manage this in their contract, e.g., if the tariff increases above that specified in the tender, it would have to be reviewed by the board and they have also included annual and five-year independent tariff reviews. They want to avoid the charge point operators getting a monopoly in an area and being able to charge whatever they want. York is an example of a local authority that own their own chargepoints, so they have the ability to set their own tariffs.

North West Leicestershire Council spoke about how they charge a flat rate (hourly) instead of kWh. They partnered with Pod Point and after reviewing historic data found that people connecting are leaving within 15 mins. They wanted to understand if it was their prices, connection issues or statistics and the experience of others that had caused this trend.

County Durham Council charge for both parking and for electricity and they charge 30p per kWh. Croydon Council also charge 30p/kWh at some of their chargepoints.

4. Thoughts on the next forum

At the end of the forum, we invited feedback on what people thought from what people liked or wanted to improve and ideas for the next session, plus informing the services we provide to councils around decarbonising transport. The most popular ideas for future forum topics were:

- Trailing cables
- Funding for EV charging installations and council fleets
- More on traffic regulation orders
- Contracts and asset ownership

5. Questions and Advice

Throughout our online forum, local authorities asked more general questions, here is a summary:

Area	Question	Advise
Security	Experiencing high levels of vandalism, what can we do?	Does your the area have known issues – contact your Anti-social behaviour team they can find stats on criminal damage or arson from UK police stats https://www.ons.gov.uk/ When contacting residents about local chargepoints, highlight any threatening actions. Review if your car park needs CCTV or plan for this contingency in future installations.
	Chargepoints can be accessed by 1 general key	Talk to your chargepoint provider to discuss Add a clause to your contract if you have agreed a different way of accessing the chargepoints.
Home charging	Has anyone permitted the use of trailing cables for charging?	We have found that most councils state no trailing cables are allowed under Section 162 of the Highways Act. Some allow it in the fine print at the owners own risk. Hampshire County Council's guidance on trailing cables can be found here: https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/electric-vehicles/ev-charging-guidance
Business	How to find out about which businesses are	Have you linked in with the economic team or other council teams with their business engagement

	investing in EV infrastructure?	surveys or business communications?
Car Parking	Should we start charging for electric bay parking?	If you are finding that EVs are parking for an extended period, beyond the time needed to charge and therefore not allowing others to use the chargers then it could be worth considering charging for parking as well as the cost of energy. Some local authorities have found that commuters were leaving the cars all day charging when parking was free so have now introduced parking charges.
Data	Any national statistics on charging data	<p>Find more on chargepoint stats here:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport/about/statistics • https://www.zap-map.com/statistics/ <p>Recommend your chargepoints usage is monitored.</p>