

Local authority EV forum Discussion summary

5 October 2021



Local Government Support Programme

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1. Background to the Local Authority EV Forum

Energy Saving Trust hosted the first local authority EV forum on 5 October 2021 as an online event, in partnership with the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV). The aim of the forum is to help officers to find answers to their questions and share their experience with others working on public chargepoint delivery, especially slow/fast AC charging infrastructure.

The theme for the first forum was chargepoint procurement and funding. 52 officers from 45 local authorities attended, plus representatives from OZEV.

Following a presentation from Gary Cook (OZEV) and some quick polls, attendees were allocated to four break-out rooms. To cover a wide range of questions, each facilitator started with a different theme and therefore the notes under each section in this summary report reflect the experiences of about 5 to 10 authorities.

The next forum will be late November/early December. In the meantime, officers are invited to join a new MS Teams group to continue the discussion (email lgsp@est.org.uk for details), and to a webinar on 21 October focused on procurement frameworks ([Registration/recording link here](#)).

2. Polls

Using Slido, we gave attendees opportunity to respond to two live polls. Of the 33 who responded, about a third of attendees were at the earliest stages of assessing their options, with a quarter applying to ORCS. Just over 40% had awarded a contract, the most popular option, and a quarter working on a second or third tender. The percentages do not total to 100% as attendees could select multiple options.

The word cloud captures the biggest challenges experienced by attendees, with the font size indicating how frequently a word or topic was mentioned.

Figure 1 What stage are you at in procuring chargepoints?

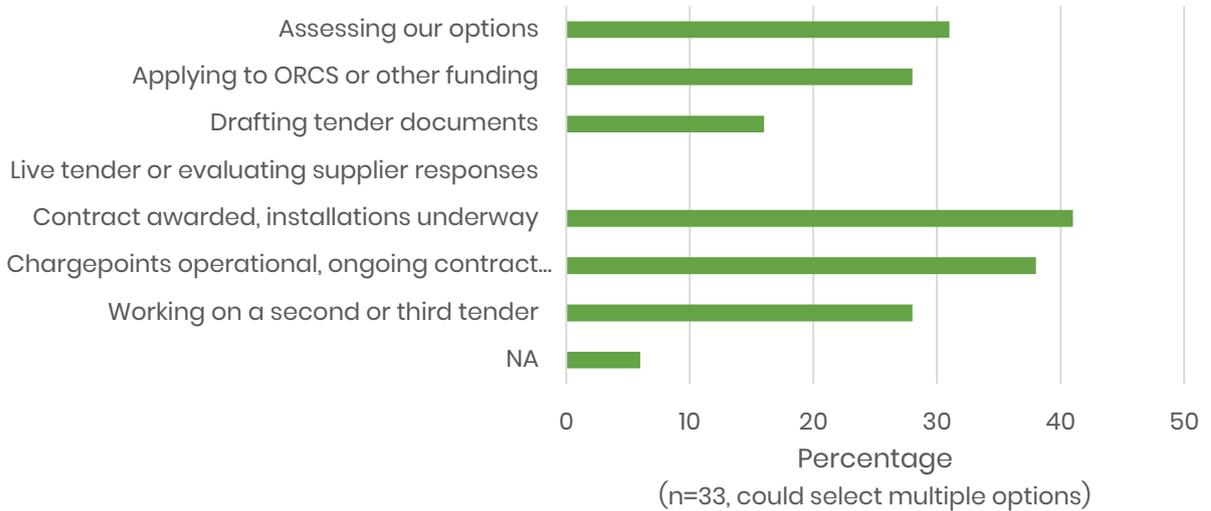


Figure 2 - What has been your biggest challenge so far in relation to procurement or funding? (n=33)



3. Summary of the breakout room discussions

3.1. Funding & overall process

3.1.1. Have you accessed ORCS funding? Did you do this before or after appointing a supplier?

- Authorities were divided in their approach. One undertook procurement before applying for ORCS to enable them to be flexible in their discussions on locations with suppliers, before committing to specific locations in an ORCS application.
- In contrast, another had ORCS funding in place and are now procuring a supplier. They noted some suppliers prefer grant funding to be secured before proceeding with a project.
- One authority mentioned that they hadn't applied to ORCS. This was due to the eligibility criteria that the land must be council-owned ruled out parish council car parks, where the land is often held in a trust. Others mentioned they have applied for ORCS funding on behalf of parish councils or supported them through the procurement process.

3.1.2. Did you (or plan to) use a procurement framework or Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS)?

- The ESPO framework was mentioned most frequently, but attendees also mentioned ones available from Kent Commercial Services, Crown Commercial Services, the Central Southern Regional Framework, the NHS Car Park and management and infrastructure frameworks. A framework (originally linked to the Go Ultra Low City Scheme) is also open to London boroughs.

3.1.3. Are you working with parish/town councils, districts, counties, or neighbouring authorities on procurement?

- Approaches to partnership working varied between councils. One combined authority reported they had the same procurement approach and similar maintenance agreements in place with districts across their region. Others have informal, regular discussions with neighbouring authorities, however some have struggled to achieve any county-wide coordination.
- When engaging with parish councils, one authority reported they had experienced nimbyism regarding TROs¹ and therefore plan to be more proactive with earlier engagement in future, rather than using letter drops stating where chargepoints installations are planned.

¹ Traffic Regulation Order – used to restrict access to a parking bay, for example for EV charging.

- One authority mentioned that having a strategy in place early helped them engage productively with neighbouring authorities and residents (i.e. to explain the principles behind their balance of on-street and rapid chargepoints, role of the council and private sector).

3.2. Commercial models

3.2.1. Could the market deliver what you initially requested?

- Broadly attendees found that the market has been able to deliver against the specifications they have put out to tender. However, one noted they had to compromise on functionality and user experience (didn't specify how) and another that smaller operators can struggle to meet requirements, such as providing data.

3.2.2. Who owns the chargepoint hardware and/or the below ground infrastructure (e.g. grid connection)?

- Although only a few suppliers have business models where they retain ownership of the below ground infrastructure, one authority described the challenge their requirement for LA ownership of the network had caused in their procurement for a concession agreement. They now have an agreement in place (where the LA owns the underground infrastructure, and the supplier owns the above ground infrastructure for the contract duration) and this will provide more flexibility when retendering the contract in future.
- Several mentioned that network ownership will revert to the local authority at the end of the contract but didn't specify if this is both the above & below ground infrastructure.
- Some authorities have taken an 'own and operate' approach and therefore have full responsibility for all the infrastructure and maintenance. A few explained that while they currently have an 'own & operate' model, they are considering concession agreements for rapid installations, when current contracts end, or for future projects.

3.2.3. What profit or revenue share or rental payment do you have in place?

How did you evaluate the options?

- One authority mentioned they had been flexible on the nature of the revenue share. After negotiation, they agreed a guaranteed revenue share (10% of the kW rate). Another mentioned they had a contract clause at 4 years which will allow them to switch from receiving a fixed amount per bay to an income share, depending on utilisation rates.
- As they 'own and operate' their network, another authority said they received all the revenue, but noted the importance of considering the costs of maintenance, especially as not all eventualities are covered by warranties.

3.3. Locations & technology choices

3.3.1. What criteria did you use to determine which type of infrastructure to procure? How did you select locations?

- While attendees did not go into detail about their criteria, they described some factors influencing their decisions. DNO costs were the deciding factor in some cases.
- One highlighted the considerable pressure from councillors for rapid chargepoints in market towns. These will be installed in council-owned car parks via a concession model, with some Highways England funding (as near the Strategic Road Network).
- In terms of location choices, one authority started with a resident survey to provide evidence that there was demand for on-street chargepoints. Another authority (a large urban area) mentioned they had selected sites for chargepoints near motorways (there are few service stations in the region), so visitors can use these during the day and residents overnight.
- On a more strategic level, one authority described how they have decision against on-street installations and therefore have installed chargepoints in public car parks and are building two ultra-rapid hubs (they have control over tariff to keep costs affordable given this is intended as an alternative to slow charging for residents).
- Another highlighted the difficulties they've had in assessing their area's infrastructure needs due to the uncertainty over the role of local authorities, although they are aware of the need for equity of access. In response, another council said they had overcome this through setting a short-term strategy up to 2025, which communicated their focus on providing chargepoints in commercially unviable locations over the next 5 years, and leaving opportunities for commercial operators.
- As a general comment, one authority noted that about 20% of their chargepoints are used more than the other 80% put together, highlighting the need to monitor usage and potentially adapt plans.

3.4. Specifications

3.4.1. Which were the trickiest elements in drafting a specification?

- DNO costs were repeatedly mentioned, especially getting accurate costs (the design tools are estimates and quotes can be subject to review at a later date).

3.4.2. *What did you specify in terms of interoperability (OCPP) and data security?

- Several authorities said they had specified OCPP1.6 or 2.0 compliance.

3.4.3. *How can LAs ensure chargepoints are upgraded throughout the contract? For example, near the end of the contract when a private provider will have less time to obtain a financial return, and in locations where there is a social need but a limited financial return?

- Authorities acknowledged the uncertainties surrounding upgrades, such as what constitutes an upgrade and how any requirement for operators would be enforced in practice.
- Most seem to be assuming that upgrades will be in the interest of the operator to boost utilisation rates (a few have experienced operators pushing for upgrades) and ultimately increase the likelihood of securing a contract extension/renewal from the local authority.

3.4.4. How much flexibility did you provide in your specification?

- One authority reported they had been very flexible in terms of locations, as long as the core aims of the project (rapid charging for taxis) was met.
- A London borough mentioned that the GULCS framework gave them flexibility in terms of locations, but not the [technical] specification.

3.5. Contract management and resourcing

3.5.1. Do you have internal resource to work on EV charging? How are these posts funded?

- The majority of authorities did not have an “EV officer”. More typically, chargepoint delivery had been added to another role, such as public transport or active travel. Some also have responsibility for fleet electrification and fleet/staff chargepoints. Where councils do have an EV officer or teams, this is generally through project funding (i.e. Innovate UK or Go Ultra Low Cities).
- Several authorities have used Community Infrastructure Levy funding (might be allocated via climate emergency budgets) for staff or for investing into chargepoints (match-funding). However, it was acknowledged that some areas have more CIL funding than others and will not cover all costs.