

WLGA: written response to questions from 12 January meeting:

Current provision, strategic vision and KPIs

- Views on the Welsh EV charging strategy 'vision' that electric car and van users should be "confident" about accessing the charging infrastructure they need when they need it by 2025, and views on and how success should be measured.

There has been progress in terms of rolling out charging points. If this is continued through to 2025 it should increase confidence of EV users and reduce range anxiety. However, there have been issues of delays connecting new points to electricity supplies, concerns over reliability of charge points with reports of equipment not always working, and different payment methods and problems with poor signals to accessing web pages/apps. Such experiences can affect confidence but are not unique to Wales. The need to be able to cope with **peak** potential demand (and to keep pace with growth in the number of EVs) is important here. Success should be measured in terms of having capacity to meet demand, whereas failure will be reflected in queuing. Queuing for charging was experienced in other parts of the UK over the Christmas period as higher than usual numbers sought to charge for long distance journeys.

- Views on whether delivery of the Welsh EV charging strategy's 2025 'vision' is on target.

The vision is OK in its own terms. Comments on progress towards targets/KPIs in the strategy were sent previously (and are attached again). Whilst some KPIs have been met, several are behind schedule. Those comments also highlighted equalities considerations regarding EV charging and the conflict between policies to meet EV charging demand on the one hand and, on the other, trying to reduce car use and encourage active travel.

- Views on why infrastructure deployment has been faster in Scotland and England.

Much of the early development of charge point elsewhere in the UK was driven by a mixture of public sector investment and by private sector providers responding to commercial demand. The uptake of EVs has been slower in Wales and the market has responded accordingly in terms of charge point provision.

Reports indicate that Scotland initially had the highest number of EV charging devices per 100,000 population compared to England and Wales. In Scotland there was early and substantial public sector investment in the charging network (c£50m followed by a further £30m to be matched by the private sector and spent over the next four years). Charging was offered free of charge in many places initially on the ChargePlace Scotland network. However, the position is changing as the rate of *growth* in the number of points in Scotland has fallen behind that in England. There have been reports of 1 in 4 Scottish charging points not working properly, so the number of points by itself is not a reliable indicator of success. Furthermore, the availability of free charging was found to create a perverse incentive, deterring private investment and encouraging many people who could have charged at home

to use public charge points instead. Applying a cost will help to attract in private sector investment.

- Views on whether TfW and local authorities have the powers, tools and resources needed to deliver the vision.

Councils are facing many challenges and cost pressures. In the transport field alone they are responsible not only for keeping the highways and associated structures safe and maintained but they are also having to take forward many other areas of work. These include:

- active travel projects (often on routes that involve complex land ownership and legal issues)
- introduction of the default 20mph speed limit
- collaboration on bus service reform and transport integration, whilst keeping buses and home to school transport running at a time of rising energy and labour costs
- managing the winter service and building resilience in the face of increasing incidents of extreme weather.

Resources are stretched and there are difficulties recruiting staff with the required skills, especially in the face of higher wages in the private sector and, in a number of areas, loss of staff to Transport for Wales as it expands. Even with powers to act as the highway authority, therefore, it is a challenge to accommodate all of these demands.

- Views on whether the action plan targets and KPIs remain appropriate; and views on the fact that a number of KPI deadlines have been missed.

The attached document contains a commentary regarding progress against the KPIs. As suggested above, several of the KPIs have not been met to date and so a refresh of these is probably needed. Targets need to be reassessed in light of trends and changing technology.

Grid constraints and community energy

- View on the fact that electricity grid constrains EV charging infrastructure deployment and views on how the Welsh Government, TfW and local authorities are collaborating with DNOs and chargepoint operators to address this.

Grid capacity is a major issue across Wales, especially in rural areas (mid-Wales in particular where the grid is weak) and where three-phase supply is required.

In addition, councils report waiting months for Distribution Network Operators (DNOs) to connect their charge points. In RCT, as part of a wider programme of installations across Cardiff Capital Region, works to install points commenced on many sites selected around mid-2022 but the council is still awaiting connection by

WPD (now renamed as National Grid). Once the work to connect commences, it may take no more than a week or two at the most, but the main delay is waiting for the DNO.

- Views on why the grid continues to be a concern given - scale of investments / grid planning.

There are significant costs involved in upgrading the grid. In rural areas and other sparsely populated settlements, the return on that investment can make it uneconomic. Public sector intervention is then necessary and, indeed, that is the approach WG is taking, filling in gaps that the private sector operators will not take on board itself.

- Views on whether plans to combine community renewable generation and electricity storage to support EV charging infrastructure are being implemented effectively, particularly in rural areas.

Generation of renewable energy at a local level is an attractive option, where possible, as it reduces the loss of energy experienced in long distance transmission, it creates some local economic opportunities and it guarantees the electricity being used for EVs is coming from 'green' sources. Costs of connection to the grid can undermine the viability of key, but often remote, sites for generation. The possibilities associated with private wire connections and/or storage to enable such schemes to proceed therefore warrant serious investigation in such locations. Lessons can and should be learned from projects that manage this successfully so that more can be brought forward over time. It may be possible to work with the generating companies to maximise community benefits in this respect, or to develop local ownership opportunities for residents.

Infrastructure delivery on the Strategic Road Network

- Views on whether the right infrastructure is being delivered in the right locations on the SRN
- Views on the data sources and decision-making process used in selecting locations.

Modelling has been undertaken to identify key locations on the strategic road network as part of a strategy for Wales (Arup was commissioned by WG). The aim has been to identify an 'idealised' network of charging points. The models take account of issues such as predicted demand, grid connection capacity and synergy with other planned developments. In looking at demand, however, it is important this is not based solely on current levels of EV ownership in an area and socio-economic conditions. Parts of the SRN serving low income areas should not be overlooked or given a low priority on the grounds of low levels of EV ownership. Over time, as petrol and diesel cars are phased out, all cars will be EVs. As the second hand market develops, EVs will become more affordable so all areas will need access to charging points.

Set against this, though, provision of charging points throughout Wales does run the risk of undermining the objectives of modal shift and increasing active travel. If it remains relatively easy to drive a car, many people will continue to be reluctant to switch to active travel or public transport.

Land use and spatial planning

- Views on whether land use planning policy effectively supports public and private EV charging infrastructure deployment.
- Views on how the planned review of building regulations and permitted development rights should support infrastructure deployment
- Views on how both local and strategic development plans can better support deployment of charging infrastructure.
- Views on whether local planning authorities require additional support from the Welsh Government and TfW.

Off street charging infrastructure can be installed under Permitted Development Rights and planning permission is not required for on street provision. Planning Policy Wales 10 (PPW 10) requires planning authorities to seek the installation of EV charging points for at least 10% of parking spaces in new non-residential developments. Such planning requirements/conditions could be extended to other types of development. Roisin Wilmott from RTPi will be attending the session and will be well informed on these matters.

Investment

- Views on how successful Wales has been in accessing both private sector investment and the UK Government funding for local authorities.
- Views on comment (from EVA Cymru's written evidence) that local authority investment is "sporadic and uneven with a broad lack of community engagement."

Wales has not attracted its 'fair share' of UKG grant funding in previous years so WG worked with WLGA and councils to support a number of successful bids to OZEV's On-Street Residential Charging (ORCS) programme, which meets 75% of costs. In these cases, WG has met the other 25% of the cost and those schemes will be implemented in 2023/24. However, UKG is looking for more private sector investment to be drawn in and will not accept WG meeting the funding gap in future rounds of bidding.

As part of WLGA's climate change support programme work is being commissioned to look at ways of attracting more private sector investment in to support the development of charging infrastructure.

Electric Vehicle Associations (EVAs) exist in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland and other countries. They all differ but essentially work to represent the community of EV drivers and promote EV use and infrastructure development. As recently as

last August there was no EVA in Wales but a call was issued to gather names interested in forming one. EVA Cymru would, therefore appear to be a relatively new body and it is not clear how representative they, or their views are. It is true, though, that investment has been highly dependent on securing funding to take work forward and, then, on being able to make the necessary electrical connections etc (as above). Therefore it is not surprising that experiences vary across Wales, dependent on how successful councils are with funding submissions and on factors such as grid capacity in an area.

Communication and quality standards

- Views on TfW's work on communication and stakeholder management, and views on the planned EV Charging Service Desk.

TfW's plan to develop a service desk that can act as the 'go to' place for info on EV charging makes sense as it will be helpful for all concerned to have one central, technical source of advice and information. This should help to ensure a more consistent approach across Wales over time. TfW are attending the January meeting of CSS to outline their plans and develop dialogue with councils. WG and TfW officials have also met with WLGA officers and its transport advisers to discuss EV matters.

- Views on whether public communication receives sufficient attention.

It is important that a communications plan is developed alongside the roll out of charging points to ensure sources of information are well sign-posted. This is vital in terms of building confidence to make journeys in EVs with confidence, overcoming 'range anxiety'. Communications need to be rolled out alongside the provision of equipment and timing is important in this respect, to avoid raising false expectations. Help in sorting out problems and being able to communicate on-site, in real time, needs to be looked at too.

- Views on what the Welsh quality charging standard identified in the action plan will look like, how and when it will be delivered.

UK Government is setting standards for charging provision and WG is influencing these and supplementing them where appropriate (e.g. Welsh language issues). This is important in terms of giving certainty to the industry. A Welsh national quality standard was supposed to have been delivered by the end of 2021 but is still awaited. Work is understood to have been commissioned and so hopefully they will be available fairly soon. In the absence of the standards, issues over compatibility of equipment and different payment systems will continue to cause problems/driver anxiety. The standard needs to address such issues and give certainty.

Securing economic benefits

- Views on whether the strategy and action plan are bringing economic benefits, investment and innovation to Wales.

It is still early days. The WG strategy identifies a need for between 30,000 and 55,000 fast chargers by 2030 and up to 4,000 rapid chargers. Only a fraction of these is currently installed. In 2021 there were approximately 1,000 public charging points in Wales whilst grants had been given via UKG to support around 3,500 domestic charge points. The numbers of both are growing rapidly however. It is important that potential economic benefits are maximised by considering how best to ensure development of local service and supply chains with the appropriate certification and complementary training provision, as opposed to relying on companies coming in from further afield.