

REA position: private & local authority EV infrastructure grants and funding in the UK

REA position paper for submission to the UK Office for Low Emission Vehicles as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review

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With thanks to Stan Fielding, REA Transport Policy Intern, for his thorough research which has informed this paper. You can view his [LinkedIn here](#).

Key grants referenced in this briefing: Workplace Charging Scheme (WCS), EV Homecharge Scheme (EVHS), Onstreet Residential Chargepoint Scheme (ORCS).

Summary for policymakers

- Industry requests extensions to the EVHS, WCS, and ORCS
- EVHS requires significant reform if it is to continue to attract participation by installers
- Support for apartment blocks and those with shared parking is lacking and dedicated resource is required
- ORCS should allow for OPEX funding
- A clearer vision for how local authorities should engage with the transition to EVs is required from central government, including support for the development of local strategies and tenders
- REA has prepared this paper for submission to OLEV. A separate REA-wide submission, which includes the below wording and analysis, has been submitted to Treasury directly.
- Further analysis on these grants and international research on how other European countries are supporting the deployment of charging infrastructure can be found in the Annex.

Introduction

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the ensuing economic downturn the UK government has promised to pursue a resilient and “green” economic recovery, in the wake of the legally binding commitment to reach Net Zero by 2050.

Key moments that will expose how serious the Government is about pursuing a Green Recovery include HM Treasury’s Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) (ongoing) which will set departmental spending budgets for 2021/22 to 2023/24 and capital budgets for the period 2021/22 to 2024/25 (or earlier).

In announcing the CSR, the Chancellor has promised to prioritise “the development of technologies that will support the government’s ambition to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050”. The CSR will follow an interim report of the Net Zero Review in Autumn.

The likely net increase in capital budgets for government departments in the CSR and the renewed government attention on sustainable technology development presents a unique opportunity to review current spending schemes in place and, under the request for representations to the CSR, to propose recommendations for spending over the next five years.

The EV Homecharge Scheme (EVHS), Workplace Charging Scheme (WCS), and Onstreet Residential Chargepoint Scheme (ORCS) are all considered capital spending and will be covered in this Spending Review.

EV Homecharge Scheme

Background and issues

The REA is concerned about the recent reduction in the EV Homecharge Scheme (EVHS) to £350. The scheme is important as it ensures that only OLEV approved installers and products are in the market (which addresses concerns around installation and product quality and safety). It also ensures that, in lieu of legislation, chargers being installed are 'smart' – a key element of a smart electricity system able to integrate high levels of renewable power and electric vehicle deployment.

However, we are hearing reports from the market that since the reduction in the grant from £500 some installers / operators are opting to forgo the bureaucracy of the grant and install lower-cost 'non smart' chargers for similar margins. For a more detailed UK market analysis see Annex 1.

The REA welcomes changes made to the application for the grant in September 2020. This will reduce the burden on installers and others in the market seeking to claim the grant and will result in a more streamlined market.

The grant, however, is claimed up-front and remains inflexible. It does not accommodate for charge points leased to customers by third-parties such as banks, energy suppliers, and / or automotive manufacturers. This is an issue as it makes the grant less accessible to those of more limited financial means who might not have the upfront capital to pay for their home charger.

Cashflow is another major issue facing charge point installers, who are often commissioned for a job by a charge point manufacturer or developer. However, it is the installer who is required to claim the grant and they often must wait weeks or months before payment. This is a disincentive for installers and other parties to use the EVHS which, as mentioned above, delivers benefits to the sector.

Finally, the grant is considered valid only following the completion of an installation. This leaves installers and others in the supply chain vulnerable to sudden changes in grant administration or funding levels. This was a particular issue in the Spring of 2020 when the grant was suddenly reduced from £500 to £350, leaving many in the sector out of pocket as jobs had been contracted but not completed and in turn required retrospective scheme changes to address the problem.

The REA understands that many EVHS procedures were developed in the early days of the grant when concerns about mis-use of public funds by an emerging sector were prevalent. The REA argues that following nearly a decade of growth and refinement in the domestic EV charging installation sector, such concerns are now less warranted and the scheme should be changed to reflect maturation in the market.

Spending Review Requests

The REA recognises that in time, the home and workplace EV charging industry will need to transition to a system where infrastructure can be deployed without direct subsidy (e.g. in the form of grants). In the meantime, as unit costs decline and the sector establishes itself, the REA requests the continuation of the EV Homecharge Scheme. If the scheme is not to be

returned to the £500 rate, and be kept at £350, we strongly urge Government to adopt new procedures and rules to ensure that the scheme remains utilised and, by extension, installation and product quality remain controlled. High-level changes to the EVHS being requested include:

1. The leasing of charge points installed under the EV Homecharge Scheme. Banks, energy suppliers, automotive manufacturers and automotive leasing companies, in particular, should be able to bundle a leased charge point into the overall lease of a vehicle or package of smart home energy technologies (e.g. solar PV or thermal, electricity or heat storage, and heat pumps).
2. To encourage the growth of the service-based markets, decrease the minimum period that an EV must be leased to gain access to the EVHS grant scheme from 6 months to 2 months. This will raise awareness of the benefits of having an EV, develop private EV infrastructure, and encourage the market for the leasing of EVs. The WCS does not currently require an employer to prove that employees own an EV. The REA considers it highly unlikely that homeowners will to spend hundreds of pounds on an EV charging point unless they are expecting to own/lease an EV.
3. The amended EVHS should address the issue of payments being required only following an installation. We request that the scheme is transitioned to being voucher-based, akin to the Workplace Charging Scheme.
4. The REA requests greater funding to the team administering the scheme so that applications can be processed at greater speed.

If an alternative to the grant is being considered by Government, we would request that they investigate tax rebate schemes akin to those used in Belgium, Italy, and France. This is our preferred alternative option. International market research on how other European countries approach supporting the installation of charging infrastructure can be found in Annex 2.

Note on apartments & EV charging

The REA would like to note that there is currently no targeted support for EV drivers living in properties such as apartments blocks with either allocated or unallocated communal parking. This is a major issue as the existing EVHS focuses on those with private off-street parking is likely supporting those who are able to afford to live in such properties. Lower-income individuals with communal parking cannot benefit from the EVHS under its current form.

The REA requests a targeted scheme (either a grant or tax break) that supports prospective drivers living in such accommodation. Targeted support for leasehold management companies may be applicable given the majority of these property types tend to be leasehold, and running a cable from the parking space to an individual property's power supply could be challenging.

Issues relating to the EVHS process and application form

Following OLEV's helpful amendments to the EVHS application form in September 2020, there remains still several areas that require improvement/change if we are to continue to have engagement from the installation market. These include:

- Regarding the requirement to provide serial numbers of chargers on Part A of the EVHS form - the Part A is completed before booking and chargers are often in warehouses abroad at this stage. Installers only keep stock of the chargers that within their authorisations sell consistently or are on constant reorder. This adds significant complication and difficulty for installers and is not something that should be required ahead of installation. This requirement should be moved to another section of the form. Part A could be split into two parts with one aspect being completed by the customer (vehicle declaration) and then checked by the installer.
- Digital signatures should be part of a single online process provided by OLEV / DVLA. OLEV should provide a centralised resource for digital signatures to ensure clarity of what is required. This would significantly streamline processes.
- In Part A there is a box relating to whether the landlord's permission has been secured. This box needs a N/A option, as confusion around the existing question is resulting in rejected claims which then require installer and OLEV resources to address.
- Regarding the process of paying out installers who have successfully claimed the grant, the REA strongly requests that OLEV includes reference numbers on payments. At present installers are unable to tell which payment is for which job, making the accounting process extremely difficult.
- Any form of batch submission inevitably means that some customers are included even with known details missing, as many customers are not adept at sending correct details through first time, or due to inconsistencies with rejections. Batch submissions (and resubmissions) also therefore means large amounts of cash flow being withheld which adds up to considerable sums as time goes on.
- The REA is concerned about new requirements for installers to be providing land registry documents to prove customers have off street parking if the photos are not clear. This is providing problems in the market including rejected forms and irritated customers. It is also reportedly very difficult to get photos showing off street parking that meet OLEVs requirements, which are inconsistent.
- Installers are also concerned about the requirement for cost breakdowns to be provided to consumers and believe this should be kept confidential.

Workplace Charging Scheme

Background and issues

The REA is supportive of the Workplace Charging Scheme and sees the role of employers encouraging their staff to go electric as essential. The WCS dovetails with other Government policy to support employers going electric, including the significant reduction in Benefit in Kind rate for electric cars. Overall, members report higher satisfaction with the processes and administration of the WCS compared to the EVHS.

The scheme, however, limits the use of chargers supported under the WCS to the staff of an employer. The REA sees this as limiting and counterproductive. The REA understands that this limitation is linked to concerns around state aid and EU rules.

Request

The REA requests the continuation of the WCS at current levels to 2025, following which a transition to a tax-based incentive scheme.

Particularly following the UK's departure from the EU, the REA requests that the terms and conditions of the WCS be amended to allow:

1. For the leasing of chargers supported by the WCS, which would particularly support smaller businesses
2. For the WCS to allow for greater flexibility in the use of chargers, particularly by non-staff of the organisation participating in the scheme.
3. For it to be allowed for chargers to be made available to the public outside of working hours. This could enable many without private off-street parking to charge overnight.

Local Authority Funding and the On-street Residential Chargepoint Scheme

Following significant work and consultation with REA members, local authorities, and associations such as the British Parking Association, the REA believes there should be an expanded role and support for local government to roll out charging infrastructure.

The REA welcomes the recent administration amendments to the Onstreet Residential Charging Scheme. Allowing for more upfront capital to Local Authorities claiming the grant should expand its uptake. However, the REA notes low uptake to date and uneven distribution of the application of the grant. In our view, this is because many local authorities still do not know which department should be responsible for EV installation and operation, what kind of maintenance is required, and overall are not fully aware of what their role in the decarbonisation of transport is (considering that the provision of petrol and diesel refuelling infrastructure is not presently in their remit).

Local authorities are also particularly cash poor at the moment and are generally operating at reduced capacity. This constraint also impacts the maintenance of chargers in some instances, as the ORCS does not provide operational funding to the units, just funding for the installation of a unit.

Overall, the REA would like to see an expanded role for local government in the transport transition. Local authorities are well placed to make decisions about traffic patterns and resident's needs. We note a few successful tenders by local government in the UK so far, including in Nottingham. We would like to see an expanded use of local authority tenders and the development of wider transport decarbonisation strategies.

To address this, the REA requests:

- The continuation of the Onstreet Residential Chargepoint Scheme, but with provisions for local authorities to access funding to operate and maintain the units installed (OPEX).
- A clear direction to be set by central Government on the role of Local Authorities in enabling the decarbonisation of transport. This could be set out in the forthcoming EV Infrastructure Strategy from OLEV.
 - As part of this, local authorities should be guided to manage roll-out in a demand/request led way to ensure that chargers end up in the right places to support those residents actively switching to an EV. This mirrors the model used in Milton Keynes and Dutch cities of Amsterdam and Rotterdam where the model has proved very successful.
- New funding to be made available to local government for them to upskill staff and develop low-carbon transport strategies (and how EVs sit within this strategy) that cover charging infrastructure (as well as other potentially required energy infrastructure, such as hydrogen refuelling or enabling battery storage).
- An expanded role for the Crown Commercial Service and emphasis on local authority tenders for the provision of charging infrastructure, potentially accompanied by central government funding for LA's wishing to roll out a tender.

Annex 1 - UK Market Overview

Introduction to the EVHS and WCS

The Department for Transport reports that as of 1st of April 2020, there were 17,947 public EV charge-points available in the UK. The number of public charge-points has grown by 402% between 2015 and 2019, and by 9% in the first quarter of 2020. While this public infrastructure is important in promoting travel distance and energy security for a driver, the vast majority (80%) of charging occurs at home. The Electric Vehicle Homecharge Scheme (EVHS) and Workplace Charging Scheme (WCS) are the two grant schemes in the UK which support EV private charging infrastructure for homes and companies, put in place by the Office for Low Emission Vehicles (OLEV). 75,254 private charge-points have been installed under the EVHS between September 2014 and June 2019, and for the same period 1,391 vouchers were received by companies under the WCS.

As of the 1st of April 2020, the EVHS is a grant for 75% of the cost of the purchase and installation of one charge-point per EV up to £350 available to households which have or will have an eligible EV. OLEV decreased the maximum grant from £500 to £350 in April 2020, stating that by decreasing the amount of the grant, the number of households able to benefit will increase from 30,000 to 57,000. In addition, the EVHS is only available for the installation of certain charge-points which must first satisfy minimum technical specifications and receive approval from OLEV. Since the 1st of July 2019, part of the technical specifications include being a “smart” charger, which includes the ability to receive, process, and react to information, adjust and record energy consumption, be accessed remotely through the Open Charge Point Protocol (OCPP) (or equivalent), and have appropriate cyber security measures.

The WCS covers 75% of the cost of the purchase and installation of a charge-point up to £350. It takes the form of a voucher which is applied for by the company receiving charge-points and passed on to the WCS-approved installer, who can then redeem the voucher with OLEV. Each voucher, from April 2020, covers up to 40 charge-points per premise. Like the EVHS, chargers must be approved and satisfy minimum technical specifications, but unlike the EVHS these do not include any smart capabilities beyond remote data collection.

Analysis of Strengths & Weaknessesⁱ - EVHS and WCS:

The REA notes that it launched the [EV Consumer Code](#) for domestic charge point installers in Spring 2020 in order to address many of the concerns outlined below.

This section is derived from online research and in-person interviews conducted with industry stakeholders over the past 3 months.

It has been noted that consumers in the UK have a low responsiveness to price changes in EVs but are highly sensitive to the price of EV charge-points. While this would mean that a grant of any level should be successful, EV charge-points under these schemes are complicated as they face new competition from installers opting to forgo the EVHS (in particular) and associated paperwork to instead install lower-cost non smart chargers. In some cases this can result in a stronger return for them than navigating the EVHS.

This means that, in some instances, the grants are failing to adequately incentivise the purchase of eligible charge-points and use of approved installers, in favour of cheaper non-smart units. This gives both industry and Government less control over quality and standards in the charging market.

The three sections below focus on strengths and weaknesses of the schemes which do not entail adjustments with a direct increase in expenditure.

The EVHS's application process was amended in September 2020, which should make it easier for installers to progress applications but still does not address all industry concerns. Read about the scheme changes [here](#).

Quality assurance: currently, both schemes in their minimum technical specifications require eligible charge-points to be accompanied by a three-year warranty and mandate a three-year operational life. While this is a strong clause to encourage accountability by the provider to the customer, concerns have been raised by the actual servicing of warranties by installers. There is concern that the current scheme transfers much responsibility for the failure of the EV charge-point producer onto the installer rather than the manufacturer.

This has become a more significant issue since July 2019, when smart chargers can cause customer issues with firmware updates but it is the installers (not the manufacturer or designer of the software) who is deemed responsible. Not all equipment OEMs are understood to provide a quantified level of suitable customer tech-support as part of their process of onboarding chargers to OLEV schemes.

Smart Charging capabilities: The inclusion of the "smart" capability, described above for the EVHS, encourages an EV infrastructure which is prepared for future grid flexibility. The specifications also allow for variation and an uncapped level of "smart" capabilities in the charge-points. While it is a current limitation of the WCS that it does not include this minimum technical specification, there is legislation expected in 2021 to mandate that all private chargers have a "smart" capability. This will be linked to the draft BSI PAS 1878 standard (see REA comments on the draft standard [here](#)).

By setting this standard for the entire market, this could also help support the second weakness of both schemes: that by having a grant level which is too low, they are failing to incentivise the purchase of "smart" charge-points over cheaper "non-smart" charge-points.

Grant administration: The administrative process of the EVHS has been discouraging the use of the scheme for installers. Installers face long payment delays because of delays between installers providing proof of instalment and response and complicated forms which encourage mistakes. Particularly for small-scale installers, they are unable to continue to provide installation services without the ability to weather the risk of long waiting times and having their file denied.

This is not an issue for the WCS, where a voucher-based system means that the recipients of the charge-points have to go through the administrative process for bundles of charge-

points, rather than individual ones, and the installers only provide the service once the installers have received the grant from the government.

However, both grants are seen as relatively immobile as they only apply to products which are fully purchased upfront or are leased for a period of at least 6 months. The market now is shifting towards bundled products and leasing of cars, and these grant schemes are not supporting this direction of growth and accessible use of low-emission vehicles.

In addition, the WCS only permits the use of EV charge-points by employees of the business which receives the grant, limiting the potential of these charge-points to support public EV infrastructure outside of work hours, which could be of interest both to the government, to private individuals, and to the businesses who own the charge-points.

Annex 2: International Market Analysis

This section outlines the current state of national EV infrastructure markets and corresponding government policies in a number of European countries.

This information, along with brief considerations of the respective strengths and weaknesses of each approach, aims to inform recommendations for the UK market.

The Netherlands:

The Netherlands is widely seen as a model for successful incentive policies in EV uptake and in EV infrastructure development, with the highest charger density worldwide and the highest ratio of slow EV charge points to cars worldwide. Generous public EV charge-point installation programmes are available; any member of the public can request free of charge the installation of a charge-point near their home throughout the country.

While there are no direct private EV charge-point incentive schemes, the Environmental Investment Allowance (MIA) and the Random Depreciation of Environmental Investments (VAMIL) provide the opportunity for businesses to receive investment deductions on, among other technologies, EV charge-points.

With low access to in-house parking and therefore charge-points in the Netherlands, coupled with their evenly distributed high population density, the focus on public charge-point programmes has worked well in supporting EV uptake.

Norway:

Norway has a similar experience to the Netherlands as an EV success story with heavy public investment and no current private EV charging incentives, either in grants or in tax cuts.

While there is a €2.1mill scheme helping housing associations installing charge-points, the key area for incentive programmes in Norway has been in benefits associated with EV ownership and use, such as large purchase tax cuts, VAT exemption, and half-price fees on toll roads and public parking.

Norway has seen significant uptake of EVs in recent years with battery-electric vehicles claiming a 42% market share in 2019.

France:

France has seen a more recent commitment to transport electrification and EV infrastructure development. France has not based its strategy solely on large-scale infrastructure projects though it does have, like in the Netherlands, an “on-request” public charge-points provision scheme for private individuals near to their residence (known to REA as the ‘Milton Keynes Promise’ – REA report that addresses this from 2018 [here](#)).

Run as part of the ADVENIR programme, this is operated by municipalities which are given up to €2160 by the federal government per charge-point installed. In addition, the programme offers more simple grant schemes to incentivise the purchase and installation of EV charge-points for apartment blocks, and for the electrical pre-equipment of car parks (including those of companies). Finally, for the year 2020 there is a €300 tax deduction incentive for the purchase and installation of EV charge-points at the main residence of private individuals.

Italy:

Italy’s EV infrastructure development has in the past lagged behind the uptake and technological development of EVs, acting as an obstacle to their increased uptake throughout the country.

The National Infrastructure Plan for the Recharging of Vehicles powered by Electricity (PNIRE) and the more recent Eco-Bonus programme have strengthened Italy’s progress in infrastructure development. Like France, Italy offers incentive schemes in the form of tax deductions but has made them simpler and more generous. Private households and companies can claim a tax-deduction of 50% for the purchase and installation of EV charge-points, up to a total of €3000 from March 2019 to December 2021.

Germany:

Germany has made significant commitments to developing its EV charge-point infrastructure. In the Climate Action Programme 2030 it sets a target of one million charging points to be made available, mandates charging stations in all petrol stations, and has announced a “buyer’s premium” for private and commercial charge-points (the details have yet to be announced).

Finally, Germany intends to simplify legislation around the installation of EV charge-points. Ongoing incentive programmes are run primarily at the municipal level. The exception is a 10-30% subsidy for the purchase and installation of a wall box charge-point from the state-owned development bank KfW-Bank.

Municipal incentive schemes provided by the government and municipal utility companies vary significantly between Lander, and increase in complexity by being influenced (for

example in Nordrhein-Westfalen) by charge-point power, accompanying energy production plants, and source of electricity for the charge-point. As in Italy and France, there are short-term ongoing incentives on top of long-term ones, ending in November 2020 in Nordrhein-Westfalen.

Belgium:

Belgium has seen a slow growth in EV infrastructure, particularly compared to its neighbours Germany, France, and the Netherlands. Incentives are predominantly tax-exemptions to promote EV ownership, along with 75% of the cost of charging being deductible from individual income tax.

The only incentive for the purchase and installation of charge-points is for companies which work under the corporate tax system which can benefit from a 13.5% deduction on investments for the purchase and installation of charge-points, up to €14,375.

This lack of drive to develop the EV infrastructure in Belgium comes from a number of areas. Firstly, the political situation with three regional governments and a divided federal government halts the implementation of legislation. Secondly, the majority of traffic in the capital, Brussels, comes from the regions of Flanders and Wallonia, and while there is incoming legislation for only low-emission vehicles to be allowed into the Brussels region, investment has however been focused on promoting public transport, bikes, and carsharing schemes as a response to this legislation.

Finally, while there is also a commitment to at least one charge-point per square kilometre in the city centre, this is a public infrastructure commitment rather than an incentive scheme.

Sweden:

Sweden has notably lagged behind its exemplary neighbour, Norway, regarding EV uptake and EV infrastructure development. Under the Klimatklivet initiative agreed upon by the Swedish parliament in 2017 for the period 2018 – 2020, the purchase and installation of EV charge-point stations have been subsidised up to 50% or SEK 10,000 (€960).

This is accessible by municipalities, companies, and housing associations. In addition, Sweden's "Charge at Home" extends this same subsidy to charge-points for private individuals at home.

Ireland:

Ireland is an interesting case in EV infrastructure development because while it appears to be advancing well on paper, it is frequently considered to be falling behind other countries.

Since 2011, Ireland has had a grant of up to €5000 on privately purchased EVs, and a subsidy of €600 for EV home chargers since 2018. Both subsidies are supported by other forms of tax reliefs. Through the Electricity Supply Board (ESB), Ireland's state-owned electricity company,

there has equally been heavy investment in a public infrastructure in addition to the incentives for private infrastructure.

The 2020 Budget pledged to double the number of home chargers installed. As of 2018, Ireland's share of the global EV market was approximately equal to its share of overall vehicles, and in addition has a ratio of one public charge point for every five EVs, which is far higher than the average ratio in Europe. Ireland offers generous subsidies on both EVs and EV charging infrastructure, has invested heavily and successfully in creating a widespread public charging network, and is holding its own in EV uptake.

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ⁱ This section must be preceded with a notice on the data available around private chargers. To the best of this author's knowledge, there is no public data available on the number of private chargers sold in the UK. While there is data on the usage of the two schemes, this is not enough to prove whether the schemes have had a positive causal effect on private EV infrastructure development in the UK. In addition, details on the failure rates and smart

capabilities of individual or collective EV charge-points are equally scarce. This section on the effectiveness of these schemes, their strengths, and their weaknesses therefore relies in part on available inputs, particularly interviews with various leading industry experts with experience in policy, manufacturing, provision, and consultation.