

ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING STRATEGY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report provides members with an update on the development of a medium to long-term future strategy for electric vehicle charging infrastructure across Argyll and Bute.
- 1.2 Over the past four years Argyll and Bute Council has secured over £700,000 of Scottish Government funding to install electric vehicle charging points across the Council area. The extent of the current network across Scotland can be viewed at <https://chargeplacescotland.org/>
- 1.3 The external funding has paid for the acquisition and installation of the charging points themselves, however, there is no parallel revenue funding for maintenance, the original expectation was that these costs, and the costs of providing electricity to users free of charge, would be absorbed by the relevant local authority.
- 1.4 While this approach may have been suitable in the short-term, with the increasing popularity of electric cars, and the continued reduction in local government funding, the Council agreed at its budget meeting of February 2020: *Reflecting Transport Scotland advice, agrees that a charging regime should be developed for all Electric Vehicle Charging Points with charging for 2020/21 to be on the basis of electricity consumption cost recovery and a report on the long-term approach to come to the September 2020 meeting of the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee.*
- 1.5 The COVID pandemic has seen staff across the Council diverted onto other areas of work and as a result a charging regime has not been progressed. As part of the budget process for 2021/22 there are a number of themed reviews and the approach to EV charging is being taken forward as part of these. This report provides some information on what is being considered and it is proposed that a charging model will be included in the annual scheme of fees and charges to be implemented from 1 April 2021.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

Members are asked to:

- 2.1 Agree that the long-term charging approach should be developed as outlined in this report
- 2.2 Note the intention to have fees included in the annual scheme of fees and charges for 2021/22

3.0 DETAIL

- 3.1 In 2017 the Scottish Government set out an ambition for Scotland to phase out the need for new petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2032 due to the fact that transport accounts for over a quarter of the country's greenhouse gas emissions, with road transport being responsible for 73% of those emissions.
- 3.2 On behalf of the Scottish Government Transport Scotland has administered significant amounts of capital funding for electric vehicle charging infrastructure. Argyll and Bute Council secured over £700,000 of that funding to install EV charging points across the Council area.
- 3.3 The Council has to date absorbed the revenue costs associated with the provision of the EV chargers within existing Roads and Infrastructure budgets. When the charges are implemented we will be moving in line with the other authorities across Scotland i.e. Edinburgh, Aberdeenshire, Fife and Highland councils who have already moved forward and applied charges. This will allow us to both recover future costs and to generate a surplus to reinvest in the EV network and alleviate additional future revenue pressures on current budgets.
- 3.4 Chargers are located in towns throughout the Council area including Campbeltown, Dunoon, Helensburgh, Lochgilphead, Oban, as well as Islay, Mull and Coll. The result of the work is a reasonable network of EV chargers which can be viewed at <https://chargeplacescotland.org/>
- 3.5 Funding continues to be available and further EV charging schemes are currently being progressed for Tighnabruaich Car Park, Lochgilphead, Tiree and Coll.
- 3.6 In addition to the current installations, a medium to long-term strategy around future installation and management of EV chargers is required to ensure that they are complementary to other transport links and enhance the overall transport infrastructure in Argyll and Bute. To ensure this happens joint working will be required across the different departments within the authority i.e. planning and housing.
- 3.7 With a high number of dispersed smaller communities, providing public transport services is challenging. As a result, there is an increased reliance on private cars to move around the region and to access employment and services. Vehicle ownership in the HITRANS region is 18% higher, and average

distances travelled by road are estimated to be around 20% higher than the Scottish average.

- 3.8 Investing in EVs, provides an opportunity to enhance the connectivity of people to each other using a greener solution and remove barriers to accessing employment, education, leisure activities and essential services. The low population densities in the region mean that private car use will remain a necessary mode of transport for many people and businesses.
- 3.9 With the Scottish Government ambition to phase out the need for new Internal Combustion Engines (ICE) vehicles by 2032, it is expected that sales and use of EVs will grow rapidly over the next ten years. These rates of growth also have the potential to significantly increase the electricity consumed across the region's charging infrastructure.
- 3.10 In addition the rural nature of the area increases the cost to transport goods however electric vehicles have lower operational costs; this in itself brings a significant opportunity to increase the competitiveness of local businesses in rural communities. However, this will only be achievable if the infrastructure that facilitate this change is available. Introducing a charge that covers future asset management costs will allow the local authority to reinvest in this network and achieve this.
- 3.11 At present the operation of charging units requires a communications connection, typically made via the mobile network. This presents challenges in remote parts of the region that lack coverage or have a highly variable quality of signal. In particular, the latter issue is leading to failed use of charging units, false reporting of faults and difficulties in accurate reporting of charging point availability. Consideration should also be given to how the private sector is engaged to explore opportunities for privately led deployment of infrastructure.
- 3.12 Also worth consideration is the source of electricity for EV charging points – whether this be from the National Grid or from self-sustaining sources. More environmentally friendly sources should be thoroughly explored, although this is likely to be in the longer-term.
- 3.13 Argyll and Bute Council does not have a current strategy or policy on Electric Vehicle Charging. In order to appropriately consider the longer term sustainability of the chargers it is proposed to progress the strategy in the following timeline to ensure the research and implementation, if approved, can coincide with the next financial year.

ITEM	DETAIL	DATE
Research and benchmarking against other local authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Price model comparative work 	Oct -Nov 2020
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial breakdown of what costs incurred to 	Nov 2020

	date, all fees, charges, staff time, maintenance and upgrades	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asset management plan; possible future consultation on where new installs should be and if community ownership is viable 	Nov – Dec 2020
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consideration to obstacles i.e. connectivity and requirement for joint working with planning dept. 	
Draft strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide range of viable charging options for consideration utilizing best practice where possible Set guidance for private installations Update website with FAQs on EVC 	Dec 2020
Finalise at least the charging proposals for inclusion in the budget process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update with any recommendations from EDI 	Early Jan 2021

4.0 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The Council has successfully installed 28 EV chargers since 2015/16 across the area with the aid of grant monies from the Scottish Government. To date electricity has been provided to users free of charge. These costs have been absorbed but with the increasing popularity of electric vehicles, such a model is not sustainable in the longer term.
- 4.2 As per the Budget decision of February 2020, Officers are now progressing with the development of a sustainable charging strategy. The principles which will underpin that strategy are outlined in this report for members to consider.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Policy – the recommendations in this report would see the Council develop an EV charging policy
- 5.2 Financial – proposals are based on recovering whole life costs

- 5.3 Legal – none
- 5.4 HR – none
- 5.5 Fairer Scotland Duty
 - 5.5.1 Equalities – none known
 - 5.5.2 Socio-economic Duty – none known
 - 5.5.3 Islands – none known
- 5.6 Risk – no further risks
- 5.7 Customer Service – none

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