

Briefing Note

Residential EV Charging Provision



To: Economic Development & Infrastructure Services Committee

Date: 6 February 2024

This briefing note has been prepared to provide some high level background information in relation to the Notice of Motion on the agenda for this committee relating to residential charging infrastructure for electric vehicles. This has been done with the consent of the Chair of the committee acknowledging that a summary of key issues would be of assistance to members in properly debating a motion on this matter.

EV Strategy Background

There is an approved Electric Vehicle Strategy and Expansion Plan for the provision of publicly available charging points in Moray and in last June (2023), approval was given for the Council to join the Pathfinder project with Aberdeenshire, Aberdeen City and Highland Councils.

The Pathfinder Project seeks to find a provider to operate and expand the charging network across the four council areas. Included in the Moray Council area is an allowance for up to 50 on-street charging points for areas where the majority of residential properties do not have on plot parking.

It should be noted that the majority of residential properties in Moray, some 70%, have on-plot parking – this is higher than the Scottish average of 63%.

The various tender documents for the Pathfinder project have been prepared and are awaiting publication once the necessary grant funding for the project has been confirmed.

It is anticipated that subject to funding and securing a provider the on-street charging points will be provided from 2025 onwards. Consultation will take place with regard to the proposed locations and residents will be able to suggest locations/areas for on-street charging points.

Resident requests for permission to lay cables across/within the public footway

A number of residents have approached the Council seeking to lay cables across the footway so that they can charge their electric vehicle using their home electricity supply. There have been a series of trials in England where residents have been permitted to lay cables or install channels for cables across the footway. However, councils in Scotland have yet to accept the outcomes of these trials or undertake trials of their own. It should be noted that there are a number of differences between the road network in Scotland and the highway network in England, both in terms of different (although mainly similar) legislation and differences in the physical layout of roads e.g. in England street lighting columns are generally at the kerbside, whereas in Scotland they are always placed to the rear of the footway.

The options being trialled/pursued in England include the use of cable covers when cables are being laid temporarily over the footway – which can be an obstacle for pedestrians with impaired mobility (those using walking frames or those who ‘shuffle walk’) and impaired vision (who would not be expecting such an obstacle in their path). The main alternative type of provision being trialled is a channel cut into the footway with a moveable lid to take a cable when charging is taking place. These

channels are promoted as being flush and not acting as an obstruction to pedestrians. However, they are reliant on their proper use and maintenance – sometimes the covers are not laid correctly and are a trip hazard, they also can fill with debris and be a constraint for public utilities which run along footways and need to be accessed for repairs and upgrading. There are also short and longer term issues around the costs and responsibilities of installation and maintenance – including when a residential property is sold to a new occupant.

Councils across Scotland are awaiting the outcomes of the trials of this new infrastructure.

Outline Consequences for Moray

Many of the locations where properties do not have off street parking, are also in areas of high demand for on-street parking e.g. coastal villages, the central areas of historic settlements. A resident seeking to park their electric vehicle outside their property to enable charging may not always be able to do so. Designating the space for that property would not be permissible (even with a residents' parking scheme), although the space could be designated for electric vehicles only. This could mean in some areas, where multiple residents wish to have dedicated charging directly outside their properties, on-street parking is not available for other road users and through default becomes a 'privatisation' of what is a public asset. Marking out designated parking spaces also reduces the overall capacity of the road for vehicle parking – in streets where there are larger numbers of vehicles parking, driver behaviour tends to enable best use of space by good general parking practice with a mix of larger and smaller vehicles, however, if spaces are marked out they need to conform to design standards which allows space for larger vehicles therefore reducing the actual parking capacity of the street.

Taking into consideration the above, the approach being progressed is to seek the provision of on-street charging infrastructure which could be used by any resident or visitor to that location, as set out in the Pathfinder Project. This is an established approach in the Council's approved strategy and expansion plan. The infrastructure would be provided by a supplier but there would be clear and enforceable conditions on its use and maintenance to ensure to ensure public safety.

Should a report be called for in terms of the Notice of Motion, this would need to explore the points above in further detail but would also need the following additional elements to be properly assessed:

- The scoping out of the detail of the technical option(s) for any 'solution'
- Proper consideration of a trial rather than wholesale roll out (bearing in mind the points above about an inconclusive national position)
- The proper policy context (including review of the previously approved strategy), operational processes and technical approval (consenting) mechanisms
- Appraisal of short and long term costs and allocation of responsibility for installation, approvals and maintenance
- A full financial appraisal

At high level and based on current understanding of markets and costs, it is highly likely that the assessment process would demonstrate an overall net cost burden and liabilities to the council (even allowing for any payments made through a consenting process) with no funding source currently available to resource and progress works.