



LowCVP's Andy Eastlake Green Fleet 119 – 2019: the year charging EVolves!

Alongside a raft of other announcements on electric vehicles – with more to come in 2019 – is the Government's decision that funded chargepoints for electric vehicles will have to use innovative, 'smart' technology from July 2019. The decision is a welcome one. While it will mean – initially at least - some added costs and complexity, it signals the opening up of a whole range of new opportunities in terms of how we run our vehicles and manage our electricity system.

The commitment means that chargepoints will be able to be remotely accessed, and capable of receiving, interpreting and reacting to a signal. Smart charging will help reduce high peaks of electricity demand, thus minimising the cost of electric vehicles to the electricity system – and keeping costs down for users by encouraging and enabling off-peak charging and new tariffs.

The development could mean opportunities for fleet managers; cutting costs through recharging vehicles at the optimal time by balancing the requirements of the vehicle fleet and the power grid.

The commitment to smart charging, which was initially made in the Road to Zero strategy published last Summer, is directly linked to the work of the EV Energy Taskforce (EVET) which is convened and run by the LowCVP.

The Taskforce, for the first time, brings together energy and automotive industries to plan for the changes needed to support rising electric vehicle use. It has already begun working and will report back to Government next summer.

EVs may be a key route to enable intermittent, renewable electricity like wind and solar to be better utilised and, consequently, priced very competitively. Through the EVET we aim to put the needs of electric vehicle users at the heart of preparing the electricity system for the mass take up of EVs. It should help to ensure that costs and emissions are as low as possible, and opportunities for vehicles to provide grid services are capitalised upon for the benefit of the system, energy bill payers and electric vehicle owners.

The priorities for fleet managers and car buyers considering the adoption of electric vehicles are changing. Key considerations now focus on range and charging convenience rather than the traditional concerns of size, speed and cost.

Fleet managers – particularly those with depot-based fleets – will increasingly find themselves involved in issues of energy supply and balancing, which could also have links and impacts on their organisation's other areas of activity. While this will add to the challenge of a fleet manager's job, it will also open up new opportunities to cut costs, even to become involved in locally-based power storage or renewable supply solutions.

Some fleet managers involved with buses or commercial fleets (about 30% of total fuel use in the UK) which require large inputs of power for recharging, sometimes over tight timescales, have already become experts in infrastructure resilience and power supply issues. A number of projects to electrify larger vehicles have, indeed, become dominated by power supply and availability issues.

There's a lot more of this kind of thing to come in 2019 and beyond. It's a new challenge, but an exciting one!

FURTHER INFORMATION

www.lowcvp.org.uk/projects/electric-vehicle-energy-taskforce