

Adopting electric vehicles and sustainable travel



Overview

The decarbonisation of the transport sector, as a major contributor to the overall carbon footprint of the UK, is a critical element on our journey to net zero. As the region's distribution network operator (DNO) we have a good understanding of the actions that businesses and individuals need to take to help the region reach net zero. This understanding comes from our role in the energy industry and our own journey to become an exemplar net zero organisation.

We started to make the transition to electric vehicles (EVs) in 2018 with the introduction of our Nissan Leafs. This was followed by the launch of our EV strategy in 2019, which included plans to decarbonise our own transport and encourage our colleagues to do the same. Via our low carbon transport policy we are making it easier for colleagues to adopt EVs by installing charge points at our sites, offering an EV and cycle purchase scheme, including EVs on our company car scheme and incentivising the use of public transport and cycling as a means of travelling to work. We have also begun the replacement of our own fleet vehicles with low emission alternatives (see our separate case study on 'Fleet Transition').

This case study focuses on how we have supported and enabled employees to transition to EVs and sustainable transport.



Why we took action

There were several reasons why we took the step to help our colleagues move to EVs and other sustainable transport options:

- To empower and enable colleagues to reduce their own personal carbon footprint
- Reputation and business leadership - our colleagues and customers rightly expect us to take action
- EVs can be charged from renewable resources such as wind and solar power, further helping to protect the environment
- EVs offer other environmental benefits such as reduced noise and air pollution
- Increasing car choices to our colleagues and helping them make significant net tax and running cost savings
- Embracing recent government taxation incentives and 'early adopter grants'
- Getting ready for the 2030 petrol and diesel car ban
- Increased reliability of EV vehicles compared to petrol and diesel



Our approach

We recognised in our colleagues the passion to do something positive for the environment, and tapped into that passion via education, engagement and responding to what we heard.

At the heart of the success of our EV scheme is emotion. We started with peoples' desire to do something and created the understanding and motivation to change behaviours.

Education is key. We run a Carbon Literacy programme – recently awarded our silver certificate - to help colleagues understand what they can do to take responsibility for their own carbon footprint and change how they travel. Colleagues now also understand how much money they can save by investing in an EV – a very real incentive with employees saving around £2,500 pa on average.



What we did

In summary, what we did was to offer choice by opening up our car scheme to EVs, incentivised it with charger availability and provided additional financial support to kick start the scheme:

Choice:

We have increased our range of EVs from just one model to an open policy in 2020 thereby offering more variety and choice.

We also offer EV pool vehicles for operational colleagues to use as needed.

Infrastructure:

We have made free chargers available to all colleagues across our depots and offices, with a choice of slow and fast chargers according to users and location.

We have 117 charge points across our sites and depots, increasing all the time.

We are also planning to provide EV charging in accessible parking spaces.

Incentives:

We now offer enhanced car allowances of £1,700 for a full battery EV and £1,200 for a plug-in hybrid vehicle.

Colleagues can purchase an EV via an affinity scheme run by our car supplier with competitive finance on offer.

We offer a payment of £150 towards the cost of a home charger, for those who work from home, or prefer to charge from home.

Sustainable transport:

Travel season tickets

We offer interest-free 12-month loans for non-car users and those who regularly use public transport as an incentive to travel more sustainably.

Cycle to work

We enhanced our cycle to work scheme to include EV bikes and have removed the £1000 cap on the scheme in order to encourage the take up of EV bikes.

Home-working

We have enabled people to continue to work from home, whether part or full time, as appropriate, reducing commuter transport across the organisation.

Results

The uptake and overall difference we have seen as a result of our programme has been rapid and substantial:

- 50% of our of company car users now have an EV (including those on order)
- 74% of colleagues selected EVs in the 2021 round of company car renewals
- 50 colleagues have taken up the £150 incentive towards a home charger
- 93 colleagues have utilised the 'cycle to work' scheme incentive
- There is an ever-increasing appetite for more colleagues to move to EVs with 92% of those due to renew in 2022 considering an EV

The above results are perhaps not surprising considering the average company saving on National Insurance and re-imburement of mileage is around £1,500 per annum per car, with employees saving around £2,500 per annum in tax.



Learnings

Photo

Colleague behaviours and preferences:

- Colleagues learn about the benefits of EVs from each other's experiences creating more interest in making the switch
- Due to long lead times from manufacturing issues (global challenges) and high demand, we have started to allow people to order earlier and terminate existing contracts where possible
- 'Range anxiety' can be addressed largely via education, especially around driving behaviour. We are now working with manufacturers like Audi to help our colleagues get the best out of their EVs
- The popularity of workplace charging has grown rapidly, as a result we needed to provide additional charging bays to prevent queuing
- It's very important to engage with unions early in the process in order that any colleague concerns can be fed into any development of the scheme

Infrastructure and charging:

- Logistical planning is key on a site by site basis to optimise charging. It is also important to balance the EV transition with employees, ensuring that charge points are phased in to balance EV demand and those with internal combustion engines
- Most EV chargers installed at our sites were initially 13A outdoor plugs. We quickly learned that colleagues preferred to charge via faster 7KW chargers. As a result, a significant number of slow chargers have been upgraded to faster chargers
- Key is to understand the existing electrical infrastructure onsite and balance this against the proposed EV charge point demand. This should include assessing the approved Maximum Import Capacity (MIC), distribution board ratings and available distribution board space. Please see the ENWL resources below for support with connecting small charge points at a home or business, in addition to large commercial charge points
- Charge Point Location - optimise cable routes and charge point positioning to minimise civil works and attempt to future proof cable infrastructure. This will provide flexibilities for an increase in charge point power long-term, without additional civil works and reduce disruption.



I was nervous about getting my first EV but having taken the plunge it's one of the best things I've ever done.



Not only have I benefitted financially due to savings on my personal tax allowance and easy and free charging at work, but I have found the car unexpectedly easy to drive compared to a manual. I've not had any issues with range – helped by the fact I opted for a car with a 280 mile range (good conditions) which I rarely need. We have a trip to the south of England coming up and we'll just plan in a couple of coffee stops en route while we recharge. The fact that I know I'm doing the right thing for the environment as well is the icing on the cake!



Julie Jackson, Data Hub Manager.

Help and support

Our role is to provide impartial advice and support to help our customers and stakeholders achieve net zero. We can provide free advice, support with connections and simple information to help you make the right decisions about EVs and sustainable travel for your business.

Drop us a line at gonetzero@enwl.co.uk

Find out more about how to go net zero on our website at www.enwl.co.uk/gonetzero.