

Electric vehicles and sustainable transport



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 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. This case study focuses on how we have supported and enabled colleagues 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:

- We all contribute to carbon emissions and our colleagues told us they needed our help and support to reduce their personal transport carbon footprint
- We realised that our people and our business could save money via running cost savings and government tax incentives and grants
- The 2030 petrol and diesel car ban and clean air zone introduction has been a real incentive to be an early adopter
- We wanted to take action and lead by example to inspire our people, our shareholders and our customers to reduce their own carbon footprints
- Protecting the environment is central to our plans, and EVs can be charged from renewable sources like wind and solar power as well as reducing noise and air pollution.



Our approach

Playing our part in protecting the environment is a strong desire in us all. Our approach makes that desire attainable and affordable, safeguarding both the environment and our business.

There are tangible financial benefits involved for all, but the way we have realised those is by tapping into that passion for the environment via education, engagement and responding to what we hear.

Education is key. We run a carbon literacy programme – and have been awarded our silver certificate - to help colleagues understand what they can do to take responsibility for their own carbon footprints 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 savings around £2,500 pa on average.



What we did

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

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 electric bikes and have removed the £1000 cap on the scheme to encourage the take-up of electric bikes.

Home-working

We have enabled people to work in an agile way, whether part or full time, as appropriate, reducing commuter transport across the organisation.

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.

Incentives:

We now offer enhanced car allowances up to 43% for a full battery EV and 30% 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 interest free loans for the purchase of a home charger, for those who work from home, or prefer to charge from home.

Infrastructure:

We have made 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 120 charge points across our sites and depots, a number which is increasing all the time.

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

Results

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

- 50% of our company car users now have an EV (including those on order)
- 74% of colleagues selected EVs in the 2021 round of company car renewals
- Nearly 100 people currently use our 'cycle to work' scheme, which is an increase of 25% since we lifted the £1,000 limit
- 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-imbursement of mileage is around £2,000 per annum per car, with colleagues saving around £2,500 per annum in tax.

What we learned

Colleague behaviours and preferences

- Colleagues learn about the benefits of EVs from each other's experiences creating more interest in making the switch
- We have started to allow people to order replacement vehicles earlier and terminate existing contracts where this makes sense
- 'Range anxiety' can be addressed largely via education, especially around driving behaviour. As well as providing more chargers, we are now working with manufacturers like Audi to help our colleagues understand how to get the best out of their EVs
- It's very important to engage our people early in order to understand their concerns and resolve them as part of the development of our transport strategy and schemes.



Infrastructure and charging

- You don't need chargers in every bay to start your journey. We balanced the number and size of chargers to keep pace with the adoption rate, ensuring that charge points are phased in to balance EV demand against the use of traditional vehicles
- 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
- It's key 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 our 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 try to future-proof cable infrastructure. This will provide flexibility for an increase in charge point power long-term, without additional civil work, 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 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.