

Transport Committee

Oral evidence: [Supercharging the EV transition](#), HC 1593

Wednesday 29 April 2026

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[Watch the meeting](#)

Members present: Ruth Cadbury (Chair); Steff Aquarone; Dr Scott Arthur; Mrs Elsie Blundell; Olly Glover; Alex Mayer; Baggy Shanker; Rebecca Smith.

Environmental Audit Committee member present: John Whitby.

Questions 171–267

Witnesses

[II](#): Keir Mather MP, Minister for Decarbonisation, Department for Transport, and Richard Bruce CBE, Director, Office for Zero Emission Vehicles.

Written evidence from witnesses:

- [Department for Transport](#)

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Keir Mather and Richard Bruce.

Chair: Welcome to our second panel. I apologise for not doing this earlier, but I welcome John Whitby, who is joining us as a guest from the Environmental Audit Committee. Will the panel please introduce themselves?

Keir Mather: Good morning, Chair and Committee members. I am Keir Mather, the Minister for Aviation, Maritime and Decarbonisation at the Department for Transport.

Richard Bruce: I am Richard Bruce. I am the director of the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles, which is a joint unit between DFT and DESNZ. I do that role jointly with Caroline Low.

Chair: Welcome.

Q171 **Olly Glover:** This opening question is fairly simple, though the answer may not be: how confident are you that the electric vehicle transition is happening at the pace required?

Keir Mather: Thank you very much for that question. The short answer—I will go into in more detail—is that we are confident that it is moving at the pace required. That does not mean that there is not an enormous amount of work to do. I am certainly under no illusion, as Minister, about the scale of the challenge.

In 2025, the UK had the highest share of EV sales of any major European market. We are currently ahead of Germany and France. This past March was the highest sales month ever for EVs in the UK, and the electric car grant the Government have been running has surpassed 100,000 orders since July. There are now 119,000 public chargers across the UK, which is more the number of fuel pumps, and almost a million homes in England have access to their own charger, which allows people to benefit from charging for as little as 2p as a mile.

There is an enormous amount of private and public investment in the EV transition. In the charge point sector, £6 billion will be invested to ensure that people can charge wherever they are in the United Kingdom. The automotive sector, whether that is manufacturers or people selling or leasing vehicles, has put an enormous amount of money into the transition, because they understand the direction of travel and they are as ambitious about it as the Government are.

It is right that we celebrate the progress we have made, but I am very cognisant of the fact that the Government are setting ambitious phase-out dates. We want to lead in the switch to EVs. We think that car manufacturers share that ambition, but we are very much putting our money where our mouth is by investing £7.5 billion out to 2035 to support



HOUSE OF COMMONS

the key areas of the transition, including charge point roll-out, the cost of buying your first vehicle and the ability to charge from home.

My No. 1 message for the Committee today is that the Government are fully committed to the EV transition. We think that EVs are critical to our future. They underpin industrial growth in the automotive sector and bring real cost benefits to consumers and people who are able to benefit from them. In the current geopolitical climate, they bring real resilience benefits. They also bring enormous health benefits in terms of easing congestion and air pollution for the people we represent. The Government are committed to making sure that the transition is equitable and works for as many people as possible, and despite the challenges that we face, I believe that we are on the right track.

Q172 Olly Glover: To be clear, do you believe that the 2030 phase-out date is realistic?

Keir Mather: Yes. That is not to say that there are no challenges in meeting it. Debate is ongoing within the automotive sector. I was at SMMT Electrified a few weeks ago and got some robust questions on this exact point. I do not think people in the automotive sector doubt the principle of the 2030 phase-out date—in fact, it serves as the north star for investor certainty, which underpins the entirety of the transition.

The 2030 requirement is that all new cars are either zero emission or hybridised. We have seen that full hybrids are up 6.2% and plug-in hybrids are up 46.5% so far this year, with petrol down 3.5% and diesel down 9.8%. We expect those trends to continue out to 2030. That correlates closely with the ZEV mandate—that is the strongest demand signal that you can send. As your previous witnesses said, the automotive sector was able to meet the 2024 obligations using the flexibilities that are part of the design of the scheme, and data shows that 2025 looks promising in terms of compliance. In that context, yes, I believe the 2030 phase-out date is realistic.

Q173 Olly Glover: I hear what you are saying about the manufacturing sector, but we are hearing through this inquiry that there are big concerns about the delivery of charging infrastructure, grid readiness and affordability, and that they are all lagging behind where we need to be to achieve the trajectory to get to 2030. Do you agree with those concerns, or do you think it is all going to be fine?

Keir Mather: Oh no, I certainly don't want to give the impression that everything is fine, and we are just going to leave it to evolve as it wishes to. The Government are actively working in partnership with the charge point sector, for instance, to drive the transition, because that is necessary. We are trying to convince the public to give an EV a go and make the switch because of the enormous cost benefits that can bring, but they can do that only if they are reassured about key aspects of vehicle technology and range. With the new models that are coming to the fore, we think we have a fantastic case to make on that front.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

The public also need to be able to access public charging right across the United Kingdom. As I said in answer to the first question, we have 119,000 public EV chargers in the UK, which is more than the number of petrol pumps we have, but 100,000 more are expected to be delivered. That is part of the £400 million LEVI fund that the Government are implementing in partnership with local authorities, to make sure that we have an equitable spread of charging infrastructure right across the United Kingdom.

We are also looking at the fact that charge point access in households is what is going to not just make the transition a reality but make good cost sense for consumers, so that they can access those lower rates. The Government have a very ambitious scheme of charge point grants, where landlords, homeowners and those in the private rented sector can access almost half the cost of installing a charger. We think we have a suite of measures that drive demand.

Are there challenges? Yes, and I spend a lot of time meeting with the automotive sector and the charge point sector about what those challenges are and seeking to address them. The No. 1 thing that I am cognisant of is that the sector and consumers need certainty that the Government stand behind the EV transition, want it to be realised in short order and are ambitious about it. The timelines that the automotive sector is working to are long, and they are fundamental to how the automotive sector runs in the United Kingdom, so the Government cannot be sending mixed messages, as we saw with the previous Conservative Administration stepping back from the phase-out date altogether. That served no one's interests. People deserve consistency and clarity from Government regarding the schemes we are bringing forward and the overall policy direction. I am confident about what those policies allow us to achieve, but you are also right to say that there are big challenges too, and I am sure that that will come to the fore throughout our conversation today.

Q174 Olly Glover: You rightly emphasise the importance of consistency, Minister, but this Government made changes to the ZEV mandate in April last year. What evidence do you have of how effectively those changes are working, and does that not somewhat undermine what you are saying about the importance of consistency in policy?

Keir Mather: I don't think so, because the Government made changes to ensure that the ZEV mandate does what it is supposed to, which is allowing us to meet our climate obligations while also making a good business case for the automotive sector. What has not changed is the timelines. That is the key difference between the previous Government and this one.

With regard to whether we can say the VETS order has had x or y impact on uptake, as I previously said, the data for 2025 as it stands does look good in terms of compliance with the mandate. We monitor data on sales of electric cars incredibly closely through OZEV and in DESNZ and the Department for Transport. It is perhaps a little too early to say definitively what the material impact has been of the changes to the flexibilities.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Richard, I do not know if there is anything you want to add.

Richard Bruce: Just a couple of points. In the transition, it is really important to remember that this is a really dynamic marketplace. It is changing literally every couple of months in terms of products coming into it and their price. There are now 40 EVs under £30,000. That was a dream a few years ago, so it is astonishing how dynamic it is.

When we made the changes to the mandate in terms of increased flexibility for manufacturers, that was basically about giving them more options to deliver decarbonisation in the short term, because they are all in different places on their journey. Some of them had lots and lots of EVs on the market, some of them had fewer, and some of them had lots of very ambitious plans, but they had not come to fruition yet. Basically, it was all about trying to maintain the momentum, making sure the public line was clear that the phase-out dates were not changing and the headline trajectory was not changing, while recognising the fact that some manufacturers had 10 EVs and some had one, and giving them more ways of getting to compliance but still cutting carbon. All the measures that are in there in flexibility terms have a very small carbon penalty, and we even charge interest if they want to, in effect, borrow from the future, but they have to cut carbon in their non-ZEV fleet to be able to sell fewer EVs.

Q175 **Rebecca Smith:** Minister, you are right to say that things are going well, but you have also talked about “trying to convince the public” that this is something they should do, while maintaining that you can get there by 2030. “Trying to convince the public” does not sound like a mechanism that will get to where you want to be. You have also highlighted that the previous Government changed their position. I think they did so because they recognised that delivery was going to be difficult, and that is why Conservative policy has progressed even further towards taking away the ban on petrol and diesel cars.

In terms of trying to convince the public, I want to bring you back to the comment you made right at the beginning about the roll-out of electric vehicle charging points, because I missed what you said. You said that there are now more electric vehicle charging points than petrol pumps in the country, and that there are 1 million at-home charge points. Does that million at-home charge points get wrapped into the figure that is more than the number of petrol pumps?

Keir Mather: No.

Q176 **Rebecca Smith:** So there are more non-home-based charging points now than petrol pumps.

Keir Mather: Yes.

Q177 **Chair:** Is it charge points compared with petrol stations or petrol pumps at petrol stations?

Richard Bruce: Pumps. I cannot remember the exact stat, but there is something like 8,000 or 9,000 petrol stations in the UK. The average number of pumps is, I think, fewer than 10.

Q178 Rebecca Smith: How many of those charge points make charging as quick as filling a tank of petrol or diesel?

Richard Bruce: It is a fair question.

Chair: And there is a difference between charging a car and charging a van or HGV. We will come on to that.

Rebecca Smith: That could be an interesting statistic to come back on.

Richard Bruce: The point is you do not have the ability to fill your car up with petrol at home overnight, but you do with electricity.

Q179 Chair: Just for the record, Minister, I think I heard you just say that the ZEV mandate is a demand mechanism, when of course it is a supply mechanism.

Keir Mather: You do well to correct me, Chair—thank you.

Chair: There is no doubt that it has been effective in delivering a larger number of EVs in this country, but the last thing we want is car lots full of unsold EVs. Now, we move on to the demand side.

Q180 John Whitby: Minister, electric car grants have clearly driven sales for EVs, but the Committee has heard that they have predominantly benefited higher-income households. I think you said a few moments ago that you wanted this to be an equitable transition. How can the Government help lower-income households participate in this transition to EVs?

Keir Mather: Thank you, and welcome to the Committee. That is an incredibly important point. On what the ECG facilitates, and how that allows lower and middle-income households to take part in the EV transition, around 100,000 vehicles have been sold through the ECG. You can have up to £3,750 off the cost of a new electric vehicle.

I am very cognisant of the fact, though, that 80% of car purchases are in the second-hand market. That does not mean that these two things are divorced from each other: you need a consistent flow of EVs into the market—being sold and then sold on the used market—to allow people across the spectrum to benefit from them. That is one way in which the ECG links to broader questions about the flow of used electric vehicles into the market. That is also why we have a warranty requirement of a minimum of eight years, or 100,000 miles, on a traction battery, which ensures that, if you are getting a used EV, you are getting one that continues to excel in terms of range and reliability.

More broadly, we are seeing positive growth in the used market for EVs. There is a broad and increasing range of quite popular EV models that are now available for under 20 grand, with the average price of a three to five-year-old EV at around 18 grand. Some interesting data was released by Autotrader in February this year, showing that EVs are the fastest selling fuel type on the site, with three to five-year-old EVs selling the fastest. We are starting to see that used market grow, and people will be able to benefit from that.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Ultimately, the way that you have the equitable transition and allow everybody to realise the benefits of owning an EV—primary among them is the cost benefit—is access to home charging. That is why the home and workplace grants that the Government are implementing are so important. They pretty much halve the cost of installing a charger. We have upped them from 350 quid to 500 quid, and we are seeing large-scale uptake of the grants. That is the way you democratise access. We are specifically trying to democratise access to cheap charging costs. If you can charge for as little as 2p a mile, and essentially get from London to Sheffield for a fiver, that is going to make an enormous difference to your pocket. In the context of all the instability we are facing more broadly, we want as many people to benefit from that as possible.

Q181 John Whitby: Will there be any further support for electric motorbikes?

Keir Mather: That is a good question. The grant for motorcycles is not being continued for now. The Government have to be extremely conscious of ensuring that we put money into forms of transport decarbonisation that yield the greatest decarb benefits. In terms of uptake, we think that the market for zero emission motorcycles is healthy, but we keep all these schemes and grants under continuous review.

Q182 Baggy Shanker: We have heard that the proposed EV excise duty scheme might be the right policy but at the wrong time. Is introducing this new cost while trying to encourage more take-up a bit premature?

Keir Mather: I'm not sure about your constituents, Baggy, but I think mine would argue that there is never a right time to introduce a new tax. Nevertheless, it is unfortunately necessary because the Government are determined to make the EV transition a reality. We want to get to a place where EVs are the dominant form of car transport in the United Kingdom. That necessarily means that you have to come up with a means of raising revenue to ensure that the road network is maintained and that the contribution currently realised through fuel duty continues to be contributed to the Exchequer. That is incredibly important from the perspective of public finances, but also for the maintenance of our national infrastructure.

We are taking this transition seriously. To provide long-term certainty to consumers and businesses, it is important that we give them as much lead time as possible to know what the impact of potential changes will be. Announcing that the eVED scheme will be introduced two years before its implementation allows people to see that this change is coming, and to look at the change relative to what they are dealing with now. The eVED scheme is projected to cost around half of what fuel duty currently constitutes. People will pay around 3p per mile on an EV by 2028. That is half the current average fuel duty and equivalent to about £20 a month. People need to see that in the context of the fact that that still makes owning an EV incredibly cost beneficial if you can access home charging and charge for as little as 2p per mile.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

It is very important to remember that the announcement of eVED was accompanied by a support package for ZEVs, which includes £1.3 billion more for the ECG and £200 million more investment in charging. I know that there are some figures going around about potential damage to uptake, but if you factor in the increase in uptake that will come through that unprecedented support package, we believe that that is smoothed out.

As for it being the right tax at the wrong time, I believe that giving people long-term certainty about the direction of travel, and being clear that the EV transition is happening and that we must have mechanisms to accommodate that in the lived experience of drivers up and down the country, is sensible, pragmatic and being honest with people. We just need to reinforce the argument from Government in terms of the scheme as it relates to fuel duty at present. You are still going to be able to run an EV in an incredibly cost-efficient way, which will save you and your family money.

Richard Bruce: I would add that, although it did not get all that much coverage compared with the new tax, it is worth noting that electric vehicles started paying ordinary VED for the first time from April last year, and it did not have a huge impact. In order of magnitude, it is not that dissimilar to the likely cost of eVED and it did not have a hugely disproportionate impact on EV demand in 2025. We need to distinguish between the headlines and the actual impact on demand. There are lots of other factors driving people towards EVs.

Q183 **Steff Aquarone:** Can you repeat that, please?

Richard Bruce: EVs were exempt from ordinary VED, which you pay on every car, until April last year. That is about £200 a year.

Q184 **Steff Aquarone:** High-value EVs are not exempt from it. They get charged the luxury vehicles tax.

Richard Bruce: They did, but their band was brought down in the Budget last year as well to recognise that.

Q185 **Baggy Shanker:** The OBR has estimated that, taking into account the policies that incentivise take-up over the forecast period for eVED, there will be a net decrease of 120,000 vehicles. How does that affect the Department's planning of the transition?

Keir Mather: I will let you answer that, Richard.

Richard Bruce: It is very difficult. If you do a pure economic model and start by saying, "If we add this much cost, what will it do to the demand for these vehicles?" and you assume that car purchasers are entirely rational actors—which I argue they are not always—you might get a figure like that. We have done similar modelling. An awful lot can change in two years, and it all depends on the counterfactual and the attractiveness of EVs relative to petrol vehicles. That depends on what is happening to petrol and diesel prices and the cost of new vehicles. Given the information that it had, we can understand that might be the figure that

the OBR came up with, but we think the picture might look a lot different in two years' time.

Q186 Baggy Shanker: You say that you have done some modelling. What figures come out of that?

Richard Bruce: We have done modelling all the way through. The Treasury has done their own modelling. It is a Treasury policy, so you need to talk to them.

Q187 Baggy Shanker: What were the figures from your modelling?

Richard Bruce: I do not have them to hand.

Keir Mather: The OBR said that it expects 320,000 of the 440,000 EV sales impacted by the introduction of eVED to be offset by the measures announced in the Budget in 2025. If you combine that with the suite of measures we are bringing forward to incentivise EV uptake, suddenly that picture looks quite different from some of the catastrophising that you might have seen in the broadsheet media after the Budget.

Q188 Steff Aquarone: I get that the price in comparison is coming down. If it was just a case of existing EV drivers accepting the long-term truth that you have announced, it would be fine, but I am not sure that you have priced the convenience factor into this rejection of that modelling.

I would not suggest you are being bullied by the Treasury into generating revenue—that would be extreme and inappropriate—but if it is still not clear that the person on the cusp of making the transition will be able to solve the practical problem of charging, the intermediate inconvenience that they are still going to face means they need every incentive to make it worthwhile.

It is not a straightforward comparison of EV as it is and EV with eVED. It is the adoption impact that this Committee is most concerned about, and surely you are too. Are you really confident that somehow that money for the charging infrastructure will solve the convenience problem? I think it needs to if you are going to stand by the claim that it is not going to have an impact on uptake.

Keir Mather: It is a totally fair question. Facilitating the transition is not just about one piece of the puzzle; you need to get the charging infrastructure right, and you also need the incentives on the overall price point of the electric vehicle. There is a much broader conversation, which I will not pre-empt because I presume we will turn to it later, about the cost of public charging. We are undertaking a review to facilitate policy options in that space.

I think it is fair to say that for a consumer who might be on the precipice of making the transition, that precipice about is not paying eVED, which comes in 2028.

Q189 Steff Aquarone: But they need every incentive possible, don't they? If I am still going to have to walk down my street to get to my car, or drive and, when I turn up, play an even more extreme version of chicken with



HOUSE OF COMMONS

other drivers to find a parking space, I need every incentive possible to make the transition. I accept that it is not a tax I am paying yet, but is it not something that you need to be able to offer me as a mitigation of the inconvenience?

Chair: Particularly in the context of early adopters being the people who get the importance of net zero. The next group of adopters are potentially 50% of the middle-income earners in this country who will not be transitioning to EV for idealistic reasons, but for purely practical reasons. Surely, the Government need to do everything possible to get those people over the line and not put barriers in their way. That is another way of asking Steff's important question.

Keir Mather: I agree completely. That is why we are taking a diverse suite of policy measures in hand immediately to facilitate that.

Q190 **Steff Aquarone:** But this is specifically about eVED and the impact on uptake. Surely, you would not be doing this were it not for the revenue requirement. You could do this two years later. You could admirably advertise that it is coming two years in advance, but still do it two years later. It could still be the right tax at the wrong time.

Keir Mather: It is an interesting counterfactual. If Opposition MPs and other people in the broader stakeholder sector looked at the counterfactual to the way that we have gone about introducing the eVED scheme now, and if we got further down the road of mass adoption and with, say, a year to go before the scheme needed to be implemented, sprung it on people, there would rightly be an adverse reaction. People would have made the decision to make the switch and would then have eVED as part of that process. It is better to give people the certainty of knowing what is coming.

Q191 **Steff Aquarone:** I am not suggesting that; I am suggesting that you still give them two years' notice, but you do it later, after the next wave of adoption, which as the Chair has said, is quite a different cohort of drivers. We do not want to risk putting them off any more than they already are with the incumbent inconvenience that we have not yet solved.

Keir Mather: I do see where you are coming from, but at the same time the ZEV mandate and the policy measures that we are implementing are designed to facilitate the broadest possible uptake of EVs over an ambitious timeline. We cannot keep deferring decisions about how you continue to fund critical infrastructure on the road network. You need something to fill in the gap of what will happen if we get this transition right and realise the benefits and opportunities from it. That is why it is important that we have this conversation now, in my view.

Q192 **Steff Aquarone:** So the road budget is more important than the transition numbers?

Keir Mather: No, it is a balance between both things. You cannot facilitate the transition and then not continue to maintain the network on which these EVs run.



Q193 Chair: Still on eVED, it is interesting that the Government—I do not know whether it is DFT or Treasury—chose a quite crude mileage mechanism, when this was an opportunity to start thinking about reducing congestion by using more dynamic versions of charging for road use. There has been a lot of public pushback against that—spy in the cabin and all that—but it has been suggested that we could introduce that sort of concept in the same way as we did water metering, which there used to be a lot of objections to. Is the DFT looking at the policy opportunities with different forms of charging, excise duty or vehicle duty, or whatever you want to call it?

Keir Mather: Might it be worth pointing to the consultation?

Richard Bruce: Yes, the Treasury is consulting on the methodology by which it implements it. It is trying to balance the need for speedy implementation, acceptability, deliverability and raising revenue, with the time available, effectively. Obviously, any conversation about a new tax in the motoring space often ends up becoming a discussion about time-of-use charging, congestion charging and that sort of stuff. However, this is the approach that the Treasury has decided to take, and that is what it has consulted on.

Chair: We are very interested in what the DFT's take is, in terms of wider transport policy, on reducing congestion, which is such a barrier to economic growth in addition to the pollution costs it imposes. I am straying away from the core objective of today's session, but I am happy to have a chat with you sometime about that. Let us now move on to Government messaging.

Q194 Rebecca Smith: Government timelines for the EV transition have changed multiple times. Can you guarantee consistency in EV policy in the future to provide confidence to both consumers and the market? I realise we have asked some of those questions indirectly already, but are you completely convinced that that is deliverable?

Keir Mather: I just repeat that timelines have not changed under this Government. I am cognisant of the point you made about the different track that was taken under the last Government, because they could see the ambition and the challenge inherent in facilitating this transition. This Government are not interested in walking away from the transition because it is difficult. We believe it is absolutely fundamental. We have been unequivocal that we believe the future is zero emission, and we are going to work at pace with partners in the charging and automotive sectors to make that happen. The 2030 phase-out date, as I said in my opening remarks, is the most important aspect of this. It is what gives the sector long-term certainty, but it is also a figure that can be baked into people's minds: this is when we want to see this transition realised.

It is also important to think about how far we have come, both in uptake and in how much investment in the transition is in train. From the Government side, that is about £7.5 billion. The automotive sector has



HOUSE OF COMMONS

invested billions in adapting its supply chains; £6 billion has been put forward by the charge point sector.

The direction of travel could not really be clearer, but we have to continue to be consistent in our approach around messaging. The DFT has run our "Get that electric feeling" campaign—I do not know if anybody has seen it. What is really important about that campaign is that it is not myth-busting about EVs. Too often we go down a narrow rabbit hole of challenging people's views about issues to do with range anxiety, which of course is very necessary to address. We now want to get into the space of actually talking frankly about the benefits that this could bring to people's lives. If I can charge for as little as 2p a mile and get from London to Sheffield for five quid, I can understand the benefit that would bring to my life, and hopefully consumers can too.

The Government are unashamedly positive, ambitious and optimistic about the transition. That is what I really want to see coming through in our messaging. Consistency cannot just be, "Let me counter your view about the transition." It has to be, "This is what we have positively to offer."

Richard Bruce: A point I would add is that the reason for optimism about the transition generally is the positivity of EV drivers about the vehicles once they have them. Some 80% or 90% of people would recommend them to their friends and family and would not go back to a combustion vehicle. Because of that, you would naturally expect this to spread virally. There has been a lot of misinformation out there for a long time, and that is all people have read about some of this technology. As people become exposed to it and are socialised with it through their friends and family, they will become more positive about it.

That is the reason the "electric feeling" campaign is focusing on the positive things: EVs are great to drive and charging is not the issue you think it might be, and look how cheap they can be to run. Although that does not apply to everybody—we will come on to the cost of public charging—it does apply to the 67% of drivers who have access to off-street parking. Not many of them know, it seems, that they can run their vehicles for 2p a mile if they get the right tariff, which is staggeringly cheap.

Chair: The problem is that that is very annoying for the significant proportion of people in this country who do not have off-street parking.

Q195 **Rebecca Smith:** I completely agree with the Chair. I think we all get that, if you have one, it is great. The problem is that the vast majority of people still cannot have one for an economic reason, for example. It is great that we have heard that some are now under £20,000, but £30,000 for the average family is a lot of money to be spending on a car.

Are you not concerned that it is going to stall? You might get to 2030 when no more combustion engine cars are being sold, but still have literally millions of combustion engine vehicles on the road. What will you do about scrapping or maintaining them? Will we not just see a stalling

where everyone who can do the early adoption does it and everyone else is stuck with these combustion engine cars, potentially for 10 to 15 years, because what is the point in them changing if the infrastructure does not roll out and pavement parking does not provide this 2p a mile that gets you from London to Edinburgh for a fiver?

I love the ambition but, on the reality of this at 2030, I just do not see how the “Get that electric feeling” campaign can combat the reality of millions of combustion engine cars that people are potentially going to hang on to, because we have the war in Iran, cost of living and terraced houses from the Victorian era that are not going anywhere, which we will have to tackle. To my constituents who live in either an urban area or small villages in the countryside, the “Get that electric feeling” campaign is great if you can have it on your drive, but people who could have it on their drive have already done it. Will you not see a stalling in 2030 where people are stuck with expensive combustion engine cars and cannot make the transition?

Keir Mather: You are absolutely right. One campaign alone cannot do the amount of work that needs to be done. We are out here making the positive case for EVs because it is clear that, once people have experienced them, they do not want to go back. That does not change the material point you have made that we need to ensure this market becomes mature as quickly possible to facilitate that transition. I hope that, through my points about second-hand EV sales being up over the same period in March when we saw the highest ever month of sales for EVs in the UK, you see that that market is starting to grow.

You are right to say that, unless we can make sure that it is democratised and people have access to those cheap rates at home, we will not be able to see the scale of adoption that we want to. That is where those home and workplace grants are incredibly important, where you can halve the cost of insulation. Since 2022, all new buildings, including flats, have to install an EV charge point, but also, most important—

Chair: Unless the parking is covered—unless the car parking is in the basement, which is where most of the parking is in the new flats in my area. Planning rules can require either no resident parking or less than one per flat. There are still a lot of barriers for people who do not have their own private on-street parking.

Q196 **Rebecca Smith:** We also have the pay-per-mile scheme coming in. How do you incentivise people when you are also changing the playing field for them? A lot of people have purchased electric vehicles in good faith. Maybe that was naive; of course that was going to change at some point. Particularly to lower income families, how does that transition remain attractive when—let’s say things do settle in the middle east and petrol prices come down—you have to make the call and say, “Well I am paying per mile as well as having to pay through the nose for on-street charging.” How will that help?

Keir Mather: We have not sprung this on people, to the extent that the eVED proposal does not come into effect for two years. If you already own



HOUSE OF COMMONS

an EV, you will still, under the eVED proposals, be paying less than you would otherwise have paid in fuel duty. If you combine that with accessing home charging, you unlock the benefit. But, as you are right to say, having access to cheap charging on your street if you do not have a private driveway is the key enabler. I can point back to the home and workplace grants, but I feel I have done that ad nauseam, and I will not waste the Chair's time.

Another important piece of that puzzle is the LEVI funding, which not only allows local authorities to install public charge points in a way that makes the most sense to suit their communities, but can get into that quite tricky conversation about what type of charging infrastructure is most appropriate in each place. When I went to Ipswich back when I started in this role, I saw that they were doing pavement gullies because of the nature of the parking they have outside residential properties in suburban areas.

Chair: We are coming on to charging infrastructure and the unit costs in a moment.

Keir Mather: I will not pre-empt it, then. I am just saying that you need a suite of measures.

Q197 **Mrs Blundell:** One final question on Government messaging. One witness characterised this Government's policy as having a "foot on both the accelerator and the brake" at the same time. We have referenced the return of the electric car grant and eVED, for example. Do you understand why ordinary people feel like the Government have sent out mixed messages, and do you understand why some in the sector feel like that as well?

Keir Mather: You have to develop policy to reflect the changes that are taking place within the automotive sector. That is why eVED needed to be introduced, in the sense that we have to find a way to continue to maintain our road network and think about the contribution that fuel duty currently makes to the public finances. In terms of the overall timelines and the Government's commitment to the EV transition, I do not think the automotive sector is questioning that. I think we have been incredibly clear, to the extent that some people might wish that we had been less clear.

What we are trying to do, whether through the home and workplace grants or the ECG, is create more reasons for people to say yes to making that leap. It is fair to say that people will look at a scheme like eVED and think, "Right, what impact will this have on the total cost of owning this vehicle?" It is our obligation to explain that, in contrast with fuel duty, you are still able to access fantastic savings with home charging. We have to make that argument and be clear about it, so I am always very happy to accept challenge if people do not think that we have been clear enough. That is certainly something I can take away and reflect on. Richard, is there anything you want to add?



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Richard Bruce: On consumer messaging and the point made earlier that people with driveways have already done it, they haven't, to be blunt. The number of EVs on the road is just getting close to 2 million. There are something like 34 million cars on the UK's roads, and a large proportion of people who currently have vehicles have off-street parking and have not yet made the switch to EV. If you can convince those people to make the switch, that gives you the supply of EVs into the used market and helps manufacturers to meet the mandate.

If it were true that they had all done it, we would be moving on to the next and trickier segment. There is no denying the fact that the equity issue between those with off-street parking and on-street parking is the single biggest challenge to the EV transition, and we recognise that. But the job is not done for people with driveways—let's be clear about that—and that is why the messaging is really important. We saw an instant impact on interest in EVs from the changes in public messaging by previous Governments. You can see it live in the data on Autotrader. Consistency and positivity are really important, and things like the electric car grant really help with that.

Q198 **Chair:** Do you understand why people in the industry are saying that it feels like the Government have a foot on the accelerator and the brake at the same time?

Keir Mather: It is challenging to create systems that reflect the reality of what the transition will bring while also having a suite of measures that incentivise EV uptake. That is certainly a challenge that I recognise.

Chair: Okay. We will come on to some of the policy solutions that we have been looking at.

Q199 **Dr Arthur:** Richard, on the equity issue between on-street and at-home charging, have you discussed with the Treasury the need to equalise the different VAT rates?

Richard Bruce: At the Budget last year, we announced that we are doing a review into the cost of charging. Obviously, VAT is a matter for the Treasury, but there is a whole bunch of different—

Q200 **Dr Arthur:** It is not good enough to say it is a matter for the Treasury. It is something that impacts on your mission to drive up EV sales.

Richard Bruce: It isn't the only reason.

Q201 **Dr Arthur:** It is substantial. We talked about the cost of on-street charging, particularly for people on lower incomes. It is a huge barrier, is it not?

Richard Bruce: It is, but VAT is not the only make-up in that cost stack. There are other things in the cost stack that we can look at, that are not matters for the Treasury and that we have been discussing them with DESNZ. It is the reason we have launched an independent review into the cost of charging. Obviously, the manufacturers and the charging operators are making a big investment. They all have lots of capital—the £6 billion



HOUSE OF COMMONS

that the Minister mentioned—and they are rolling out the charge points. They need to make a return. The question is—

Q202 **Dr Arthur:** They'd love it if you cut the VAT as well, wouldn't they?

Richard Bruce: I am sure they would.

Dr Arthur: As would my constituents.

Richard Bruce: Yes. But the critical threshold on public charging is about 50p per kWh. If you can charge a car for less than that, it is basically cheaper than petrol.

Q203 **Dr Arthur:** But that is still 10 times more than the number you are quoting for driveway charging.

Richard Bruce: Exactly, but it is cheaper than petrol. Some of those tariffs are available now. If you join various schemes or if you shop at various supermarkets, you can get public charging that is less than the cost of petrol. It is worth clocking that.

Q204 **Dr Arthur:** I am keen to talk about second-hand values, which you have touched on a lot. Keir, you mentioned that 80% of sales are second hand, so the electric car grant is interesting, isn't it? Rather than spending that money on new purchases, did you think about spending it on second-hand purchases to try to stimulate the second-hand market and enable people on lower incomes to enter the EV market?

Keir Mather: In terms of the design of the scheme, I suppose I have already spoken about the flow-through effect if you have an ECG. There are now 100,000 cars, and after they have been used by their initial owner, they can then flow into the used market, with the guarantees on battery health that are part of their warranty, to allow that better democratic access.

It is inherently more complex and difficult to design a scheme for used models—Richard would be better placed to expand on that than me. We have spoken about the complexities of the public understanding what the benefits are. Even just in terms of the ECG for new vehicles, the Government need to make sure that the money we put in translates to real benefits for consumers, and that consumers also understand what the Government are doing to try to make that difference. I do not know whether there is anything to expand on in terms of scheme design.

Richard Bruce: The way the electric car grant works is that the Department deals with 20 or so manufacturers; they invoice us, and we pay them the grant. It is not a question of extending the electric car grant to used vehicles. It would be a completely different scheme and a different order of magnitude. It would be much more expensive, and you would need to have a grant that has an impact on the value. It would be very, very expensive, and it would be hard to implement. I am not saying it is impossible, but it would be a very, very different scheme.

Q205 **Dr Arthur:** You would be supporting people on lower incomes, and you



HOUSE OF COMMONS

would also be supporting a lot of smaller businesses that are selling these cars.

Richard Bruce: The key point in the second-hand market is that some of the car manufacturers are unhappy because used EVs depreciate faster than used petrol vehicles, which basically means that they get to cost parity quite quickly. When they are at cost parity, they are very attractive to people, which is why they are the fastest-selling category of vehicle on Autotrader. It is not that it is impossible to do. The question is whether that is the right use of limited public funds.

Q206 **Dr Arthur:** Yes, but that rapid decline in residual value is great news if you are in the market for a second-hand EV, but it is horrendous news if you have just bought one or if you have a leasing company. In the very short term, does the electric car grant have the impact of further depressing second-hand car values?

Richard Bruce: It depends on the model, to be perfectly honest. Depreciation varies across all the different models, and it is quite dynamic—it is changing all the time. We look at the data every month, and the gap in depreciation between EVs and petrol vehicles is narrowing over time. A lot of it is about demand. We expect that, as used EV demand goes up, the depreciation rate will go down.

Q207 **Dr Arthur:** What about the eVED? Is that not going to further depress second-hand values, because there is going to be less demand?

Richard Bruce: There is no sign of that yet.

Q208 **Dr Arthur:** It is just another barrier to buying one, either new or used, isn't it?

Keir Mather: I suppose you could argue that if you were likely to be paying proportionately more in fuel duty if you bought a used petrol vehicle, you would be getting a better deal with a used EV than you would with a petrol vehicle.

Q209 **Dr Arthur:** So people should be grateful?

Keir Mather: No, it is just a reflection of the market.

Q210 **Dr Arthur:** The other interesting thing is that it is a flat charge, irrespective of vehicle type. Currently, if I have a huge SUV—I was going to name a brand there—I am paying way more duty on fuel for a really expensive, really inefficient car, but with the eVED I pay the same, no matter how big and inefficient my vehicle is. Is that not, again, a subsidy for people who are able to afford these bigger, more expensive and less efficient cars?

Keir Mather: One thing we are starting to pick out in the debate today is about having a simple scheme that people can understand, that is technically efficient and that works for their lives. Having something that is complex might compound some of those factors, causing the unease people have about the measure's introduction.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Chair: I think we are getting to points around equity.

Q211 **Dr Arthur:** It is a real shame that simplicity too often seems to benefit the wealthier.

Keir Mather: The challenge is that EVs are heavier vehicles across the board, by the nature of their design.

Q212 **Chair:** Which many say contributes to the degradation of our road surfaces.

Keir Mather: Absolutely.

Q213 **Dr Arthur:** In terms of the second-hand market, if you are lucky enough to have an employer that has a salary sacrifice scheme, you can lease a second-hand vehicle. There are a couple of operators that will do that. But if you are a private buyer, you can't get a second-hand vehicle on a leasing scheme. We heard earlier that in France they have a social scheme to help people who are, perhaps, on lower incomes to access a vehicle. Is that something that is being considered? I have not really looked at the French scheme, so I cannot tell you how it works.

Chair: I think you can buy second-hand vehicles through a leasing scheme, but there is no Government support for it.

Dr Arthur: Yes, but it is a social scheme.

Chair: The social leasing scheme is something that I think the French Government have done—

Richard Bruce: They have, and it was very oversubscribed. They had to pause it for a while, I think. We are talking to the sector all the time about other things we can do. The single best thing we can do to support the used vehicle market is to boost demand for electric vehicles, to be perfectly blunt, because that increases residual values and makes them hold their value better, which is good for the leasing companies.

It is a fair point about allowing other people to access some of the benefits. Some of the tax benefits of EVs are, to be perfectly candid, skewed towards fleets and businesses, because there are levers that can and have been pulled, such as benefit-in-kind tax, which is how you get the benefit from salary sacrifice. Those just do not exist in the private vehicle space, which is why we have the electric car grant to try to counterbalance some of that.

It is good to see providers offering second-hand EVs and salary sacrifice schemes. The NHS has a salary sacrifice scheme for EVs, and it is open to lots of people. We should not play that down, but we are cognisant of the fact that there is a slight imbalance. The overall offer for private purchasers is not the same as the overall offer for fleets and businesses.

Q214 **Dr Arthur:** It is tricky, isn't it? You said that the only show in town is to increase demand for electric vehicles. Clearly, the low residual value will help to do that because it makes the cars more attractive on the second-hand market, but it is not a great proposition for a first-time buyer,



HOUSE OF COMMONS

knowing that you will face this huge drop in value. If you are a leasing company, you face lots of uncertainty and risk as a company. If you are the lessee, you are faced with higher monthly costs because you are taking on board that drop in residual value. How do you ride those two horses? You like the low second-hand values, but someone is paying all that value up front and losing it, aren't they? How do we get the balance right?

Richard Bruce: It is tricky. The first point to make is that we are still in the early stages of EV roll-out. The early hybrid cars and early EVs had very high depreciation because the market was not sure about their value. It wasn't sure about battery longevity, and it wasn't sure about demand. That is now changing, and it is maturing over time. There are better products on the market. Poor cars will depreciate faster than better cars. You are seeing some new EVs with waiting lists because there is such strong demand for them. Equally, one effect of the ZEV mandate is that you are seeing manufacturers, because they are effectively obligated to sell more EVs, offer very good lease prices for new EVs. They are, in a way, insulating new purchasers from some of that depreciation hit. They are not very happy about that, and they talk to us about it.

Q215 **Chair:** Even then, they are above the £100 a month leasing charge, which is key to getting middle-income earners.

Richard Bruce: Yes, but there are now quite a lot in the sub-£200 and sub-£300 ranges. As I said at the start, it is very dynamic, and it changes through the year as products come out. We are cognisant of it, and we are watching.

Q216 **Chair:** That is good to hear. Another issue in the second-hand market is servicing and maintenance, and the appropriate geographic spread of skills and mechanics in that field. In the last 48 hours, I have heard about a car seller in Inverness who cannot get a mechanic qualified in EVs within 30 miles. We touched on geographic spread, or lack thereof, in terms of charging. What are the Government doing to ensure that adequate numbers of people are qualified and experienced in servicing, maintaining and repairing EVs?

Keir Mather: I might turn to Richard to talk about intergovernmental working. On regional disparity, the sector is pre-empting quite a few of these challenges. I recently visited a Ford dealership and had an extensive discussion about retraining and skills, and how this is an attractive proposition not only for young people who want to feel like they are part of the technology of the future, but in terms of reskilling existing auto mechanics. Automotive manufacturers are taking on that process because they can see the direction of travel.

More broadly, on regional disparity, especially for vehicle maintenance but also for things like charge point access, part of that is to do with the natural evolution of the market. Areas of high density and high disposable incomes, such as London, were where EVs first spread, but increasingly the population share in respective parts of the UK is starting to match the prevalence of things like chargers. Correct me if I am wrong, Richard, but



HOUSE OF COMMONS

I think 15% to 16% of chargers are now in rural areas of the UK, which broadly matches the percentage of our population in those areas. In terms of geographic equity, we are starting to see that spread occur across the piece. Is there anything else to say on intergovernmental work?

Richard Bruce: Skills are a big issue. The Auto Council, through which the Government interacts with the sector, is chaired by a DBT Minister and is very cognisant of having the skills both to manufacture the vehicles in the UK and to maintain them.

There was a great article about this topic in *Auto Express* only last week, on how some garages are having to retrain people, how they are moving to more mobile mechanics and how it is a wholly different world because it is about high-voltage electrics as opposed to changing oil. It is happening, but it is not happening uniformly, and the sector recognises it as something they have to do.

Chair: That is good to hear.

Q217 **Dr Arthur:** I have a quick question on commercial vehicles and residual values. I sense your reluctance to get too involved in propping up the second-hand market for ordinary cars, but are commercial vehicles different? I am thinking particularly of all the small businesses that rely on both new and used. Is there the space to think about propping up the second-hand market?

Alex Mayer: Do we want to talk about vans now, or shall we save that?

Dr Arthur: It can be commercial vehicles more generally.

Chair: Particularly the resale value, and so on, of end-of-life and second-hand commercial vehicles, because that is what we are talking about now.

Richard Bruce: The challenges will be the same, in a way, in coming up with a scheme. London ran a scrappage scheme to move dirty vans off the road, and to try to get people moving into zero-emission vans. The challenges for the van market are quite unique, and we can talk about those in due course.

To be blunt, it is easier for the Government to intervene in the new vehicle market and create demand broadly, which you hope would then flow through into the second-hand market. Local authorities do a lot on this: if you have the right parking policies and the right incentives, such as tolls and other things, you can encourage people to move into those technologies. At the moment, away from the big fleets, there is definitely an issue with demand for zero-emission vans, which we need to look into.

Dr Arthur: So you acknowledge that. We will come to it later.

Q218 **Chair:** As a yes or no, do you see potential in a time-limited residual value guarantee scheme to address the uncertainty around the end-of-life value of commercial vehicles?

Keir Mather: While we recognise that there are challenges with the take-up of commercial vehicles, and that residual values play a part in that, we are focusing on delivering our existing suite of measures to drive uptake.

Chair: Okay, so you are not ruling out looking at it.

Q219 **Alex Mayer:** Battery health worries would-be consumers, probably because we are used to phone batteries that go wrong after a short time. Labour's manifesto committed to standardising battery certification. Helpfully, the UN has global technical regulation No. 22. In DFT's written evidence to the Committee, you said that you were "analysing options for the implementation". What are you analysing, and when do you think it might happen?

Richard Bruce: The first point I would make about battery degradation is that it was massively overstated as an issue with zero-emission vehicles. We have looked at a lot of the data, and it just is not an issue. The car is going to wear out before the battery pack does, and degradation is typically between 1% and 2% a year. That means that in a vehicle with a 300-mile range, you are not really going to notice it. It is a concern for consumers, and there are lots of products available from third parties in the marketplace that have come into fill that need, doing battery checks and offering data on EVs. The question is, "Is that standardised and in a form that consumers can use?". I think we have consulted or are in the process of consulting on adopting the UN approach, which we would aim to do from later this year. We recognise that it is a big issue and are planning to move forward on it.

Q220 **Olly Glover:** A big issue with electric vehicles is either misinformation or people having inaccurate and outdated perceptions. The Government have launched the "Get that electric feeling" campaign—an interesting name. What evidence do you have on the reach and effectiveness of that campaign?

Keir Mather: Unfortunately, I am in the wrong age bracket for the "Get that electric feeling" campaign, so I have not been able to realise its benefits personally in the way that I know other people have. Nevertheless, going back to the point I made before, the principle of that campaign is not to be myth-busting and correcting when it comes to the principle of the EV adoption; it is to demonstrate practically to people how it can make a difference in their lives, in the context of the challenges that people face with cost of living pressures and the global moment that we find ourselves in.

It is about unlocking the benefits of home charging and the resilience that that provides for you and your family in being able to get to where you need to go, while also understanding that for the majority of people, a full charge on their EV constitutes about two weeks' driving. People have that residual concern about, "What if I want to go to see my family in Scotland? What if I want to go to France? What if I want to make that one big trip?". The "Get that electric feeling" campaign is designed to give people a positive understanding of the reality of EV ownership.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

The campaign is just rolling out currently, so I am not sure that we are in a space to say definitively that it has had x or y impact on market uptake, because we are just not at that stage yet. We of course monitor the value for money of the campaigns that we run through the Department for Transport and measure their impact on consumers very closely, so I hope to be able to say more on it in due course.

Richard Bruce: We worked very closely with a whole bunch of industry, charge point and auto sector stakeholders about developing the campaign. I have been doing this so long that I have written endless leaflets busting myths on EVs, which get stuck on some shelf somewhere. Some of the learning from the pandemic was that you do not want to focus on the myths, because by repeating the myth, you are reinforcing it.

Olly Glover: The £150 million a week, for example.

Richard Bruce: You want to focus on the positivity. Lots of the consumer research about EVs says, "Why does no one talk about how great they are to drive?". They are great cars to drive. We are aiming to focus on the positivity. It is very targeted at the people who are most likely to buy an EV new and who have access to off-street parking. It is both positive and quite tightly targeted.

Q221 **Olly Glover:** I am glad you mentioned the driving thing, because we have seen evidence that when people actually try it, they are surprised by the acceleration and how good they feel to drive. Do you think that the Department could do more to promote practical opportunity for people to try it and see it for themselves? Sometimes, seeing is believing.

Richard Bruce: There is a whole ecosystem of organisations out there that do exactly that. There are some very active EV positivity bodies. There are podcasts. The manufacturers themselves have weekend-long test drives. Would a DFT-sponsored test drive get any more traction than one run by those organisations? I am not sure it would, but it is all about getting people in the cars. Once they are in the cars, often they are converted. We have looked at it in the past. We have sponsored stuff like this in the past. We are not in that space at the moment, because there is so much else happening— and the manufacturers, because of the mandate, are so motivated to sell the cars themselves.

Keir Mather: A series of demonstrator events are being planned in high footfall areas in partnership with the retailers themselves, but you will be unsurprised to hear that with the ambitious ZEV mandate, automotive manufacturers and dealerships are doing everything they can to push forward progressively in this space. When I visited that Ford dealership, if they have to give somebody a courtesy car, they will give them the electric Ford Puma, and people come back and go, "This was a great experience. How can I make the change?".

Similarly, the ECG can deliver enormous benefits for people by unlocking almost £4,000 off the cost of an EV, so we need to ensure that people know that that money is coming off because of the Government grant.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Autotrader will actually display the relative costs with the ECG applied on its website. It makes an enormous difference when people can see that the Government are behind the transition and that holistically, both the sector and the UK more broadly are moving at a formidable pace in this direction.

Q222 Alex Mayer: Can you talk us through the relationship between the Department and local transport authorities in terms of trying to ensure we have an equitable spread of charging infrastructure?

Keir Mather: Absolutely. I will start, and then feel free to build on this, Richard. The LEVI scheme is designed to facilitate really close working between local authorities, the Department for Transport and OZEV. It does that in a number of key ways. It gives local authorities the agency to pursue technological solutions that work best for their areas, which is important, given factors to do with urban density and existing transport infrastructure. It also focuses on capacity building among staff within local authorities, which is an incredibly important piece of the puzzle. We do not want this to be a process where the Department for Transport has these ambitious targets, but we do not know how they translate.

Rebecca, if you do not mind me using your example from earlier, it is very similar in Selby: we have a series of market towns with rural villages interspersed between them. What you have to do in that context is very different from what you need to do in Manchester city centre. Ensuring that people have the skills within local authorities to apply targets to those local contexts is incredibly significant. Some £400 million overall is going into the scheme, which we think will mean 100,000 more chargers will be rolled out than would otherwise have been the case, but we need to do it in a way that is based on the lived reality of people in their areas. Whatever local authority Members represent in England, you will have a LEVI scheme, and it will try to make those decisions about what best suits your local communities. But you are at the coalface of this, Richard, so do you want to add anything?

Q223 Alex Mayer: Before you carry on, you are talking about local authorities as if they are just one, in the singular. When there is a combined authority, and it is the transport authority, it is getting the money—yet an awful lot of this is about highways. Is there any inherent problem or challenge, particularly as this will become a bigger issue as we roll out more of those authorities, that the piece on the ground is not being delivered by the organisation that gets the cash?

Richard Bruce: The LEVI is structured so that the country is divided into 81 zones, and those authorities decide to work together to deliver the charging infrastructure so that the whole of England is covered. Of all those areas, the one local authority that has opted out because it already has so many charge points is the one that we are in now. All the other 81 schemes have got the money, and there is 400 or so staff that will be funded by central Government to roll out the charge points. There is a huge amount of procurement going on as we speak; it is going to take time to put that in place.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

The thinking behind LEVI is that it will deliver a step change in the visible offer for people without off-street parking. Rather than seeing one charge point down a cul-de-sac that is out of service, you will see thousands across your local authority area, which will make you confident that you can own, buy and use an EV going forward. It is going to take some time to get all those on the road, but of the interventions that Government can make—there is one on consumer experience generally and one on the offer for people doing long journeys—this is the one that will help to tackle the issue around the availability of public charging for people without off-street parking.

Q224 Alex Mayer: Is this definitely the right way of doing it? Do we need all these individual areas procuring their own very slightly different sets of charging infrastructure, when across the rest of continental Europe they have exactly the same infrastructure between countries? Why do we need it to be different when I cross the border between Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire?

Keir Mather: I would not say that the difference would be so material that users are going to find challenges in application across boundary lines. I would say that you need the design schemes that reflect the actual make-up of the places where you are seeking to install this infrastructure. To use the same example, when I was in Ipswich they focused on pavement gullies. That works really well if you are in suburban areas where people often have dedicated charging spaces outside their home and are able to charge their cars that way. That is not as applicable to a dense urban centre where lamp post charging or whatever else might be more applicable.

We want to make this as convenient for people as possible and therefore having nuance in how these schemes are applied is very important. But in terms of standard types, being able to charge and ease of access, I do not think there will be such a material difference that consumers will have a challenge with it.

Richard Bruce: It is important to distinguish between low power overnight charging, which is what LEVI is focused on—trying to get as close as possible to the home charging experience of other people—and the offer of higher power charging on longer journeys. We expect consumers to join a scheme to get access to a lower tariff, to make it quite low stress, and to just plug in at night and then go home. There should not be a question of having a very different approach. Long concession contracts to try to drive the price down and get lots of roll-out in local authority areas is the thinking behind it.

Q225 Alex Mayer: Moving to street work permits—*[Interruption]*—which you know this Committee is interested in, despite recent changes that allow the use of street work permits, local authorities are often still using section 50 licences for charging infrastructure installation. Can the Department help local authorities feel comfortable in permitting regimes to speed everything up?



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Keir Mather: I have seen many things in my time as a Member of Parliament, but I have never heard somebody whoop for street works. That has to be a first. In April this year we amended the traffic management permit scheme regulations to improve how street works for public EV charging point installation are managed. EV charge point operators have now been granted the legal right to access the street works permit regime instead of those section 50 licences.

Q226 **Chair:** But they are not taking it up.

Keir Mather: That is the piece of the puzzle that we need to solve. It also brings consistently lower fees. If you have a nationally standardised process, that better facilitates uptake, in my view. I don't know whether there is anything—

Richard Bruce: To be honest, it has not been that long. We are interested to know where that is happening. We are happy to work with charge point companies and local authorities to make sure it is being adopted. The whole point is to try to remove the barrier to implementation. That is what we are all about.

Q227 **Alex Mayer:** You will probably tell me this is a Home Office problem, but there is an increasing problem with cable theft, which means that charging points can be out of order. I had an example in my constituency where about 20 of them were all chopped off outside a Starbucks. Is the Department suggesting ways to try to make sure charging points are as secure as possible with anti-theft measures? Is there any best practice that you are spreading? I can see this might become more of an issue because, with the copper in them, they are quite easy to sell on.

Richard Bruce: It is a real issue. It is a particular issue for high-power chargers if they have fat cables. It is not really an issue for on-street chargers, which is the majority of them, because they often have sockets and the consumer has their own cable. We are aware of it. We do talk to the CPOs. There is no easy answer. There is CCTV; some of them put in barriers that come down; I think some of them have paint that sprays people if it happens; some of them are trying a new technique of putting steel around the cables. We do not have an easy answer, but we are aware of it and we are talking to the CPOs about it.

Q228 **John Whitby:** We have already discussed the roughly one third of the population that do not have off-street parking. How does the Government plan to ensure EV charging infrastructure can be retrofitted into existing housing stock, especially for residents of flats without off-street parking?

Richard Bruce: With a typical house, it is becoming a fairly mundane task for an electrician to fit a charge point on the house. It is just a question of connecting up to the consumer unit, if you are a homeowner. If you are a renter, obviously you need the landlord's permission. We have a grant to incentivise landlords and renters to put charge points in place so that there is not a barrier for them or a divide between homeowners and renters. We have made a commitment to consult on whether we can do more to remove those barriers. What we do not want is a landlord holding



HOUSE OF COMMONS

a tenant to ransom and charging extortionate fees to do it, or thinking about how they might charge for the electricity that goes through a charge point. All of these are issues that we are aware of that might need to be addressed as we move through the transition.

Q229 John Whitby: In Europe—Germany and France—there are right to charge schemes. Is there any consideration of something like that for the UK?

Richard Bruce: That is a similar sort of concept to what we have been consulting on; it is basically ensuring that a tenant cannot be refused, without good reason, the ability to charge an EV at home. We have been exploring the options around that.

Q230 Chair: Many housing associations have leaseholders; we are talking generally about leaseholders. Is the Department looking at giving leaseholders the right to charge, similar to what operates in France and Germany?

Keir Mather: We are publishing a consultation document on this point soon, to allow us to get a better understanding of how best we can support that, especially for leaseholders but also for private renters more broadly.

Q231 Chair: And supporting councils and housing associations, where most of the residents are tenants?

Keir Mather: That is one of the benefits of having the infrastructure that the LEVI scheme allows you to benefit from. It is not just about funding; it is about disseminating those learnings more broadly, from the local authority level back into central Government and vice versa.

Q232 Chair: On the question of covered versus open-air charging or parking areas, has that been resolved now? Are underground car parks now permitted to install EV charging?

Richard Bruce: At the moment, there is a requirement to fit charge points in new builds. There is an exemption for underground car parks, but we are looking again at that exemption.

Chair: Particularly now we know that the evidence is that EVs are less likely to catch fire than ICE vehicles.

Q233 Steff Aquarone: One level up from the leaseholder is the housing association. In my North Norfolk constituency, they took vast swathes of estate from councils and they are pretty much designed and laid out in the same way as they were when they were council house estates. It is even more complex than the typical town street, where at least the local council is in charge of the pavements and roads. In these places, the parking is quite often part of the estate—literally part of the estate—and run by a housing association, so they do not have numbered parking bays. Actually to produce and provide EV charge points would require more than just the charge points; it would probably require tarmacking and surface creation, and that is before you even get to the fact that the typical frustrated housing association resident in my constituency is a Motability scheme



HOUSE OF COMMONS

user, who is now eligible for an EV and who really needs to be able to plug it in by their house. This is a world away from having a viable solution. I am not expecting that you are sitting on the answer and have not told anyone, but what is the answer, as you see it, to how we discover what is going to work in those situations and how we can support housing associations to unlock what is pretty big potential for EV adoption now that we have price parity?

Keir Mather: Part of it is about having a degree of technological agnosticism about what methods work best in which places. Richard spoke about the ability to access overnight, low power charging rates, and the cost benefits that brings, through lamp posts and whatever else. That is an important piece of the puzzle.

It is also about making sure that people meet their obligations on charge point installation from 2022 onwards in terms of those regulations. It is also about facilitating close working between OZEV, the DFT, LEVI schemes and housing associations themselves. There is probably also a linkage piece with MHCLG, which I will take away from this session and pick up with the relevant Minister, thinking about how we can join some of those dots and share best practice. I think that is an important point.

Q234 **Steff Aquarone:** Just to be an extra thorn in that side—I appreciate your commitment to do that—we do not have lamp posts in most of these places, so access to cheap charging is limited, as you know, and the undertaking that goes from having a parking free-for-all, which is already far from ideal, to necessarily allocated parking will require more than just painting some numbers on some tarmac.

Keir Mather: Absolutely. There is an important point that has not yet come up, about accessibility and ensuring that not only charge point roll-out, but the use of cables is done in a way whereby everybody living in a local community is able to realise the benefits from it, but not have their lives disrupted by it.

Q235 **Chair:** So what is the Department doing to address that issue? I think the disability campaigners said that not a single public charge point in the UK was accessible. That may be old data, but what is the Department doing to address that really important equalities issue? While I am on it, does the Department have advice and/or regulations on not just physical accessibility, but safety in terms of lighting and the location of points?

Richard Bruce: On the accessibility point, some of the CPOs think that they are compliant with the PAS standard. They have certainly told us that they are, so it is interesting that—

Chair: It would be worth asking—

Richard Bruce: Absolutely.

Q236 **Chair:** The accessibility statistic was to do with the strategic road network, but I think the overall point still holds. You have responsibility directly for the SRN through your agency, but also more generally in terms of public policy.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Richard Bruce: The UK was one of the first countries to come up with a standard for accessible charge points, and we worked very closely with disability groups on that. We have done a review of that, which suggests that it is possibly so onerous that not many CPOs are adopting it. There is a question about whether we migrate to the alternative emerging European standard, which might be more deliverable and would deliver most of the benefits—it is a bit of an 80:20 situation.

A lot of the charge point companies think really hard about this sort of stuff and some of it is really hard: “If you have a kerb, what does that mean for people in wheelchairs?” and so on. There is a balance to be struck because, if you required it at every single charge point, you would get far fewer charge points out there.

I don’t think we have the right answer at the moment. We have made the first step. We are in constant contact with the charge point companies and are liaising with disability groups about what the right outcome is, but there is obviously more to do.

Q237 **Chair:** You also have an oversight role in terms of the Motability scheme. I am sure many Motability users would like to convert and have their next vehicle be an EV, but not if they will not be able to charge it easily.

Richard Bruce: Yes.

Q238 **Rebecca Smith:** Following on from the Chair’s line of questioning, a thought has just come to my mind about the plethora of disabled bays, which links to cross-pavement charging, housing associations and on-street parking. Obviously, people do not have a right to a specific disabled bay but, just as a supplementary question before I launch into my main one, what work have you done to enable people who need a disabled bay to park in one? Obviously, the chances are that they do not use their vehicle as often; are they expected to move further away to leave their car to charge and then move it back? That all speaks to the point the Chair just made about how we are not yet there on how we provide for disabled communities. I don’t know whether that is something you have thought about, or whether it is a niche issue that perhaps needs some thinking about.

Keir Mather: It definitely needs careful consideration. I am certain that that work is going on with the Department, but I do not have it to hand. If you do not mind, I will write to you and set it out.

Chair: That would be helpful. Thank you very much.

Q239 **Rebecca Smith:** To move on to my actual question, we have talked about cross-pavement charging a lot today, and we have talked about it a lot before. I am a former planning committee chair for a local authority, which was resolutely not interested in pursuing the issue despite claiming to be an incredibly green council. I am glad that things have moved on; to me, it was a completely straightforward option. It will not solve all the problems but, having seen cables trailing out of the top window of someone’s flat in a terraced houses to their car down below, I have seen



both sides. I am on board with cross-pavement charging where it can be done properly. What are you doing to ensure that the Department's guidance is being implemented swiftly so that we can see some progress?

Keir Mather: That is incredibly important. We produced that guidance in December 2024; it is designed to enable local authorities to develop their own policies and approvals for this technology. At the same time, it has to be cognisant of the fact that it has to address the concerns that you and lots of people living in local communities have about seeing an installation free-for-all. At least 40 local authorities across the UK have live schemes or trials to support the installation of cross-pavement channels, which are obviously opportunities for learning as much as they are opportunities for applications.

We are trying to support local authorities financially with the roll-out of this tech: we have committed £25 million to local authorities in England to facilitate the roll-out of the grants. I think 80% of local authorities have applied for that funding, so we expect a lot more places to be able to offer these things in future. Of course, we want to ensure that that roll-out is compliant with the guidance that we have produced but, going back to our previous conversation, it also has to suit the format of local communities, as it were. We are trying our very best to strike that balance.

Richard Bruce: Like everything in this discussion, lots of these local authorities are on a journey and some of them have thought, "I don't want these things across my pavements; that will be a nightmare trip hazard," and so on. But a lot of their citizens are asking for them now, so there is demand for this, and it is actually quite an obvious thing to be doing where it can work.

I think this is particularly useful in areas without huge pressure on residents' on-street parking. In London, you may rarely get to park outside your house, but in lots of other areas, even without off-street parking, you can do that quite routinely. This is an obvious way of opening up access to those low-cost tariffs for homeowners. I see more and more adoption and more and more interest, so it is going to become more and more mainstream, I suspect.

Chair: There are also local authorities like mine, Hounslow; politically, it is strongly in favour of all sorts of net zero policies and wants to implement them, but it raises risks and concerns about cross-gully operation. They have actually said to me—I have just found the email from the cabinet member—"Unfortunately, Government guidance on this topic has not yet been able to identify solutions to the challenges," but they are keeping it under review, "informed by continued monitoring of the trials taking place". There are, as I say, a lot of authorities that have positive policies on this but have practical concerns about how it would work.

Q240 **Rebecca Smith:** I want to build on that a bit. I think one of the challenges you have—I hate to burst your bubble, Richard—is that, ultimately, it is not just in London that you cannot park outside your house—



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Richard Bruce: No, I am sure that is true.

Rebecca Smith: I grew up on a road where you could park only on one side of the street. I raise that point because my parents have just bought a full hybrid because they will never get to plug a car in outside their home, since they happen to live on the wrong side of the road. Unless you start digging up the whole road, they are not going to get to do that.

There are two questions there. First, what consideration have you given to expanding that, particularly for smaller communities and villages? I do not have market towns; I have suburbs and then separate towns—well, one town. Even for urban areas, I have a community in my constituency that is effectively a number of villages that have merged into a suburb of the city, and, with the LEVI scheme, the council just wrote around to local communities saying, “We’re going to stick the EV charging points on the quay,” which is miles away from where most people actually live. What consideration are you giving to that? I do genuinely like the concept, but I assume you are not using it as a one-size-fits-all solution: “It’s all fine; we’ve delivered this and that’s going to solve the problem.”

The follow-on question to that is: what guidance, or what consideration, have you given for dealing with the disputes that will no doubt come up among neighbours, and the enforcement of people doing this without going through the usual channels, so to speak? We already know that even dropped kerbs are not done legally in many places.

We are also piling a new level of responsibility on local authorities. It is great that they are getting guidance, but how do they fund handling the disputes and the policing of it—with a small p, so to speak—and the processing of the applications, which could go from nought to thousands? What seems like such a simple solution has lots of issues. It might be too much for today, but how much consideration are you giving, and can you address some of those issues, perhaps, in another way?

Keir Mather: That is such an important point. I suppose the answer to the first part of your question is that we need to do a number of things at once to facilitate this transition. We need to have a multiplicity of technological solutions and we need to offer clear and applicable guidance. I will certainly take away the points raised by the Chair on this front, about the types of technology that we believe are going to unlock the quickest and most efficient access to those home-charging rates for the greatest majority of people in local authorities.

I share the same challenges as you, so I am cognisant of the fact that, in rural villages, those charging solutions become more complicated. That goes back to your initial point about fast charging on the strategic road network, because it is fair to say that, whereas it might take you something like a minute and a half to fill up your tank with petrol, we are not in that space in terms of fast charging EVs. But the technology is getting better and better, and the range of these vehicles is getting better and better. Whereas there was a—



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Chair: I am very conscious of the time, so please keep questions brief and keep answers to what you are actually doing or going to be doing; we all know the options available.

Keir Mather: Sorry. We've got to do a lot of things at once; that's basically what I'm saying.

Q241 **Rebecca Smith:** My second question is linked to my first. On the strategic road network, the roll-out of high-speed charging at petrol stations is not speedy enough. I live just up the road from a petrol station, and there is no EV charger there, and there is nothing in the neighbourhood. I do not know what is being done with LEVI to incentivise fuel stations to do that roll-out. That links to issues with the distribution of electricity, and the access powers and rights that other utility providers have.

Obviously, there are two ways of doing this. There is the superfast stuff that is perhaps provided in a dual-use facility, but then you also have the need for those on-street charging points. Given that renewable energy companies cannot get attached to the grid when they are installing air source heat pumps or solar panels on people's properties, and the fact that it is a mixed, busy market, what consideration are you giving to that?

Chair: The specific issue that I had not twigged until recently is that other utility providers have access powers and rights over land, but DNOs do not. Presumably, you have had a conversation with DESNZ on this issue. Is that moving?

Keir Mather: We work really closely with both DESNZ and NESO on reforms to the connections process, and we are very much advocating for EV charging stations to take better precedence within that hierarchy, as we seek to reform the grid connection process. NESO is putting in £58 billion to make sure that this is not just prioritised on a first-come, first-served basis; we want to clear that queue of congested, ready-to-deliver projects, of which a proportion are these EV fast charging sites. I do not whether Richard wants to add something.

Richard Bruce: There are lots of points in your question. First, EV charging does not have to be at petrol stations.

Q242 **Rebecca Smith:** I realise that it does not have to be, but that is clearly a useful place for it.

Chair: Particularly for HGVs that need ultra-rapid charging.

Richard Bruce: For long journeys, absolutely—we can come on to HGV charging in due course. LEVI is very focused on low-power, on-street charging, because that is how you get the cheapest tariff available for citizens.

Q243 **Rebecca Smith:** You need a space that you can sit in for a long time to do that.

Richard Bruce: Yes. Cars spend 95% of the time doing absolutely nothing. They will be parked somewhere at the moment, and the question



HOUSE OF COMMONS

is whether there is charging where they are parking. A point was made earlier about some local authorities putting the chargers miles away from where everybody was.

Many local authorities are on a journey, and some are viewing the EV transition through a 2010 prism; actually, it has moved on a lot from the idea that you can just stick some charge points in a convenient car park. We look at all the plans, and while reflecting differences in local needs, we try to make sure that they are providing a good offer to people, so that they feel they could go and buy an EV.

There is definitely a point about connections and working with DNOs to do that, but actually the roll-out of rapid chargers is potentially going faster than it is for the lower-power ones. Although the numbers are bigger, they are expanding quite quickly, because you are seeing a lot of commercial investment in rapid charging. There are now over 1,000 rapid charging hubs in the country, where you have more than eight chargers side by side, and you will see them turning up commercially.

Chair: Our HGV colleagues have said that the Government could do more, and that they cannot do it on their own—National Highways ditto. Can I move on now?

Q244 **Rebecca Smith:** I have one more point to raise. You said that there are thousands of charging points in each local authority area.

Richard Bruce: Will be.

Q245 **Rebecca Smith:** There will be. Is that not also just an incredibly large amount of street furniture that adds to the other things? Actually, we are going to end up living in a country where we will potentially have more charging points than lamp posts.

Keir Mather: Unless the lamp posts are charging points.

Q246 **Rebecca Smith:** Yes, but you are giving all this LEVI money now. The decision in my local authority seems to be that it is sticking in charging units, but there will never be enough to service everybody. Street lights are a strategic thing, and if it does not make that call at the beginning, I am assuming that there will not be an option to switch for a while.

Richard Bruce: The biggest provider of on-street charging, Ubitricity, is mainly lamp post charging. It depends on the local authority, and it depends where the lamp posts are on the pavement. If the lamp posts are offset, you cannot have a trailing cable across them, so they are not all suitable. If you are worried about street furniture, there are options for flush-fitting charge points and poles that come out of the ground in heritage areas. There are lots of options out there.

Chair: Good. We have touched on the disparity of charging costs, and the inequity linked to that, but I will hand over to Scott.

Q247 **Dr Arthur:** I want to return to the inequity between at-home and on-street charging. You talked about reviews, and you did not want to talk too



HOUSE OF COMMONS

much about VAT, but realistically the cost of on-street charging is not going to change too much, because of the cost of investing in it. Is that fair, or are you going to give us some hope?

Keir Mather: I hope I have already given you hope. In terms of the access points, if you have 100,000 more public chargers and you are better able to access them across the country, that creates an ease question. But we are looking at a suite of options as part of this review, which is going to be published in the autumn, to think about where we can go further by working in partnership with the private sector on these questions. I appreciate that I cannot go as far as you want me to on the VAT point, but we are looking at a comprehensive range of options about what we can do in this space. I do not know if there is anything else we can say for the moment.

Richard Bruce: Ultimately, it will be a market, and you will see increasing competition there. If you look at the spread of prices, it is actually quite broad—from 20p per kWh all the way up to 90p per kWh—and you will see more and more of that happening. You are also seeing commercial companies, shops and destinations offering subsidised charging. They are trying to get people to have their car there, so they then go and shop in those locations. There is hope, and I think that, over time, once the initial investment has been paid off for some of the charge point companies, and you will get more competition in the marketplace, the prices will come down.

Q248 **Chair:** So you do not see a Government role in that aspect of the charging regime, in terms of the cost of electricity at these points?

Richard Bruce: Let's see what comes out of the cost of charging review. I think that is basically our position on that—to look at the entire cost stack, what is happening and whether there are options for Government to maybe influence that.

Q249 **Dr Arthur:** Three quick questions. First, on at-home charging, there are cars that are capable of vehicle-to-grid, but the cost of uploading and downloading the electricity—the tariffs the Government have on buying electricity—makes that prohibitive. Is that something you are looking at?

Richard Bruce: Yes, there is a huge amount of interest in vehicle-to-grid. There is a spectrum of different ways you can access smart charging and lower-cost tariffs. There is charging your car off-peak and getting a low-cost tariff for that; there is ceding control of your EV so that when it charges is controlled by—

Q250 **Dr Arthur:** But each time you download electricity, you are buying it, then you upload it again, then you buy it again—there are charges associated with that.

Richard Bruce: There is not yet a mature market in vehicle-to-grid, but the technology is proving out, and that will mean lower-cost tariffs for consumers who opt to do that.

Q251 **Dr Arthur:** Yes, there is a real opportunity there. Secondly, some of the



HOUSE OF COMMONS

evidence we have had says that the standing charges associated with on-street are making things difficult, and that is going to be a barrier to reducing costs. That is a particular issue in rural areas, because often, the chargers are not used quite as much. Is that a real issue or challenge that you are aware of?

Richard Bruce: Standing charges are exactly one of the things that will be looked at in the cost of charging review. Ultimately, the rural—

Q252 **Dr Arthur:** All hope is on that review, then.

Richard Bruce: There are a lot of hopes on that review. The rural-urban piece is quite interesting on charging. I heard the previous witnesses talking about broadband; it is very different for EVs. Ultimately, in the long term, the places that will have the highest utilisation for a charge point are areas without good public transport and with a high car dependency where people drive a long way—those are rural areas. It may be that you are going to see better provision than you are expecting in rural areas, because you are going to get more bang for your buck as a CPO in those locations.

Q253 **Dr Arthur:** Rural areas can be difficult for connections. Other areas that are difficult are motorway service stations. Is support available for those operators as well? Otherwise, those costs are going to be prohibitive.

Richard Bruce: We have been working with motorway service area operators for many years on this topic. They are making significant progress; I think 80% of the MSAs now have over six chargers. They have all got at least—

Q254 **Dr Arthur:** Six?

Richard Bruce: They have got at least six, as a minimum.

Q255 **Dr Arthur:** That is not very many, though, is it?

Richard Bruce: It is a minimum standard, and those numbers are going up quite significantly over time. But there is a genuine issue, especially for more remote motorway service areas, in getting power there. We tried a pilot with the rapid charging fund to try and grant money to all the MSAs to get them to agree to upgrade their power. That did not work for various reasons, so we are now coming up with an alternative approach.

Q256 **Dr Arthur:** Did that completely not work? I heard that no connections arose from that pilot.

Richard Bruce: No. Basically, we had long discussions with all the MSAs and a shortlist of offers, and we could not agree on the terms of that grant because some of the—

Q257 **Dr Arthur:** It was not in fact a pilot, then; it was the hope of a pilot.

Richard Bruce: It was a pilot, because we ran through the entire process and they decided that they were not prepared to proceed. We are looking at different ways of doing it, because the problem has not gone away—we still need to get more power in those locations. We are definitely on it.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Keir Mather: A smaller issue that we are putting a lot of focus on regarding the SRN is signage. That is obviously incredibly important in making sure that people can access the benefits. The motorway service sector are thinking quite holistically about this, because they understand that that is where demand is shifting and they want to have their share.

Q258 **Dr Arthur:** I think that signage is also useful for people like me who do not own an EV. It tells them that charging points are all around, but perhaps they do not see them.

Keir Mather: It is a confidence marker, isn't it?

Q259 **Chair:** I am not going to let you swerve this, Minister. In fiscal policy, differential VAT rates are a powerful policy driver. We have differential VAT rates in this space, so what conversations are you and your Department having with the Treasury on addressing this disparity, particularly—in addition to various charges—the 20% VAT on public charging points?

Keir Mather: We know that the debate is very live when it comes to VAT on public charging. I have also seen the recent legal ruling and the appeal that is happening as part of it. I have conversations with my Treasury counterpart, Dan Tomlinson, on these questions and will continue to do so through the development of the scheme. That work is very much ongoing.

Chair: We do hope that those are positive, for the sake of those who do not have access to off-street parking at home.

Q260 **Olly Glover:** That is a very good segue, thinking about interdepartmental co-operation. Mr Bruce, your Office for Zero Emission Vehicles works across two Government Departments. How effective do you think it has been in co-ordinating work across those two Departments?

Richard Bruce: It is working pretty well. We have members of DESNZ who sit with us in DBT. We are very plugged in—no pun intended—to the work on electricity networks. The way I position it is that Transport is basically at the vanguard of the move to clean power and to electrify the entire economy, so we are encountering problems in advance of other sectors. We have to electrify heat as well, and obviously we are cleaning up the generation of electricity. We have done lots of work with DESNZ and Ofgem on things like the connections end-to-end review and on prioritising various connections. There is a thing called the connections accelerator service. I have had lots of meetings with the Secretary of State and Minister Shanks in DESNZ, and Minister Mather is very close with Minister White in DESNZ. We are working pretty well.

It is not all easy. My observation is that the electricity regulatory structure was set up to basically manage down the cost of a stably-sized electricity sector, and now we are in a world where we are trying to expand the electricity sector—basically, to electrify the economy. Those regulatory approaches are not always appropriate, and we are changing them as we encounter them one by one. We work with Ofgem on its green recovery scheme. We are working on prioritising getting more power to motorway service areas. We are working very closely, but there is more to do.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Keir Mather: OZEV is a critical linchpin not only in facilitating interministerial discussions about these shared priorities and challenges, but in making sure that private sector stakeholders can get in the room with the right people, interdepartmentally, at the right time. I will be hosting a roundtable with DESNZ colleagues quite soon on decarbonisation and electrification of transport more broadly. OZEV is the bridging mechanism that allows those conversations to take place. From a ministerial standpoint, it is incredibly important.

Q261 **Mrs Blundell:** Minister, earlier you mentioned the importance of certainty. The haulage sector has requested a clear strategy from Government for HGV decarbonisation. I have been speaking to HGV operators in my constituency, where 17% of jobs are in that sector. They concur that much more support and further clarity are needed. What is the Government's plan, and how is it being communicated with the sector?

Keir Mather: Thank you for that question. I also have freight in my portfolio. Given the impact on the haulage sector of what is happening in the middle east, this conversation is more pertinent than ever. If we cannot facilitate HGV operators making that switch, they cannot benefit from the resilience that a decarbonised grid can bring.

We have a three-pronged approach to facilitating the transition in this space: supply-side support and regulation, demand stimulation, and the point around charging infrastructure, which is incredibly important. In January, we published a consultation on emissions regulations for HGVs, which closed in March, and we are expecting a second consultation later this year. We want to use this process to start creating supply-side certainty for the UK market about where the direction of travel is.

Alongside that, we are making changes to our grants for HGVs. We have made them significantly more generous, increasing them from 25 grand to £125,000 in some cases. We are planning to build on these changes with our announcement of £1 billion in support for zero emission commercial vehicles. That includes the zero emission truck grant. Those are measures that are designed to drive demand.

Finally, as part of that £1 billion announcement, we have also committed £171 million to the depot charging scheme, which directly supports infrastructure roll-out. We will also be publishing our zero emission HGV and coach infrastructure strategy shortly. That will allow us to look at these issues more holistically and over the longer term.

Q262 **Mrs Blundell:** The current industry data shows that there has been quite a limited take-up of electric HGVs. Do the Government need to mandate a transition? On the previous panel, Dr Devane thought that that was a good idea, based on the success of the ZEV mandate. What do you think?

Keir Mather: We are exploring a lot of these questions through the HGV emissions regulation consultation. I don't want to pre-empt the response to it, but what I will say is that, as in a number of other sectors, a number of factors are influencing demand in this market, and it feels like the lever that the Government have is over total cost of ownership more than



anything else, to make it make financial sense for businesses—which, as I am sure you will know from your own constituency experience, operate with very fine margins—that could unlock a number of efficiencies in cost-saving benefits from making the switch but currently aren't able to do so because of the cost intensity of making that initial purchase.

That is why, once they purchase, the charging infrastructure piece has to play a part in that. That is what the infrastructure strategy is going to look at, but ramping up that discounting from 25 grand to 120 grand for some of these vehicles is going to make a practical difference for people. If you can get one HGV and demonstrate its ability to save you money over the long term, as we have said in regard to the electric vehicle space, it is about spotting the early movers and the benefits it can bring to incentivise adoption more broadly because of the resilience benefits that it can provide.

Richard Bruce: The other thing I would mention is that we are running the zero emission HGV and infrastructure demonstrator programme, which has £200 million of funding to get evidence on the heaviest HGVs and whether they can be electrified. That is going to put over 300 HGVs on the road, with over 300 charging points as well.

With the logistics sector, if you can make the numbers add up, the transition will just happen. We do not have to worry about all the emotional baggage you get with cars; it should just be a numbers game. Getting the data out in the public domain should help to drive that, which is why we have this three-pronged approach of the supply through the regulation, demand through the grants, and infrastructure through things like the depot charging grant.

Interestingly, we did a pilot of the depot charging grant last year, and there was a huge amount of demand for doing more in this space. Lots of companies want to do more, but they just need infrastructure help. They have plans to buy more vans and more HGVs. They have electricity available, too—they have checked that as well. It is quite interesting that you can electrify some of these depots—they just need a bit of a push.

Q263 Mrs Blundell: The depot charging scheme has obviously been welcomed, as you say, but witnesses to this inquiry have raised the fact that the application window is short, which meant that most organisations were prohibited from creating business cases. That is what they told us. Will opportunities to apply be opened again in the future? Are you thinking of a way to make this scheme successful for all businesses, unless restricted, especially SMEs with limited resources?

Richard Bruce: The pilot was run in quite a short time to gather some data, so it was quite a restricted window, but the funding for the new scheme is multi-year. The answer to your question is yes, there will be multiple opportunities for companies to bid, and it is aimed at being open to all sorts of companies. There is a maximum grant value to ensure that the funding isn't just swallowed or taken by big fleets, so SMEs should feel free to apply.

Q264 **Alex Mayer:** We just did HGVs, but can you tell me about coaches in the same space?

Richard Bruce: Coaches are something of a Cinderella transport mode. Traditionally, they are quite difficult to electrify, but often the technology is the same as for HGVs. I think there's a London to Cardiff electrified coach service. There is definitely a coach service in Scotland. There are some school coaches that are electrified as well—my kids went to school on one. It is happening. There are issues around the infrastructure, and issues around the availability of the models. On all the models at the moment, there are no domestically produced zero emission coaches. As demand ramps up, we expect supply to ramp up, too, to meet it.

It is interesting to try to work out what the infrastructure offer has to be to enable that to work, and how the Government can help to make it work. One of the key takeaways from the work we do on the infrastructure strategy for trucks and coaches is that you shouldn't just assume that how they currently refuel diesel vehicles is how they will refuel zero emission vehicles. We need to be quite open minded about that, I think.

Q265 **Alex Mayer:** On the depot charging scheme, in answer to a written question, Minister, you told me that three of the 92 projects were to do with coaches. Do you think we need to have a more targeted approach to coaches?

Keir Mather: That is a very fair challenge and certainly one that I will take away. There is an inherent complexity in ensuring that the charging network suits our coach sector, which was an interesting thing that you managed to tease out of the previous witnesses. It is not, as you said on freight and logistics, point to point or even last-mile services. These companies often run variable routes. The role of SMEs within the mix is particularly acute in certain parts of the coach sector, especially in areas like ours. That is certainly something I will take away and reflect on.

Q266 **Chair:** At the smaller level, I gather that becoming EV minibuses takes them over a particular weight limit, which is creating challenges for community transport operators and other operators that use minibuses rather than coaches or buses.

Richard Bruce: We will take that away. There was an issue on the weight limit for vans, which I think we have fixed.

Chair: Yes, I think it might be the same issue.

Richard Bruce: That should come into force in June, I think, but we will check if it applies to minibuses.

Q267 **Chair:** I think for a particular capacity of vehicle, if it becomes an EV, that takes it over the weight limit and into another tax bracket. Is the Department looking at that?

Keir Mather: In terms of those regulatory changes, they are focused through the Department's lens currently on simplifying MOT testing and drivers' hours rules where the electric equivalent of the same thing that



HOUSE OF COMMONS

would be used for a petrol vehicle involves more onerous regulations. Those changes are coming into force, but in writing to you, I will set out what we are doing more broadly in that space.

Chair: If you could, because it is important to those sectors—thank you.

It has been a really useful session. Thank you very much for your evidence and the time you have taken to prepare and come here today. If there is anything else you would like to cover or expand on, please feel free to write to us. We are now going to reflect on the evidence we have heard today and in our previous sessions and the written evidence we have had, and then we will consider what recommendations we may wish to make to Government. That concludes today's session.