



Department
for Transport

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From the Permanent Secretary

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP

Chair

Public Accounts Committee

Dear Sir Geoffrey,

Public chargepoints for electric vehicles

In your report of 12 March 2025, you asked the Department to write to the Committee within six months to set out the steps we are taking to address gaps in ultra-rapid chargepoint provision across the Strategic Road Network (SRN), particularly at motorway service areas (MSAs). You also asked us to provide an update on progress with the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) Fund, in particular:

- The amounts of money spent,
- The number of projects which have completed procurement,
- Whether any procurements failed,
- How the Department is continuing to support local authorities (LAs) delivering their projects,
- How the Department is applying lessons from LEVI to its other programmes engaging LAs.

Reducing emissions from road transport is the most significant intervention the Government can make towards its goal of achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050. The Government reaffirmed its commitment to phasing out the sale of new petrol and diesel cars from 2030 through the Zero Emission Vehicle (ZEV) Mandate consultation response in April. The ZEV Mandate was created to provide certainty on the scale and pace of the electric vehicle (EV) transition for consumers, energy providers, and vehicle manufactures. It came into force in Great Britain in January 2024, extending to Northern Ireland in January 2025. In July, the Government also launched the £650m Electric Car Grant to further support the transition to ZEVs and incentivise sustainable automotive manufacturing.

Accelerating the rollout of charging infrastructure is critical to achieving the EV uptake trajectories set out in the ZEV Mandate, ensuring that everyone, no matter where they live or work, can transition to an EV. The charging infrastructure landscape has evolved significantly over the past few years. There are now more than 83,000 public chargepoints in the UK, representing an increase of 26% over the past twelve months (August 2024 to August 2025, GOV.UK) and 30% since the National Audit Office (NAO) cited the July 2024 position in their report. As the provision of public chargepoints has transformed, so too has our understanding of how to address challenges.

In July, we announced a £63m package to maintain momentum on improving the provision of charging infrastructure, including funding for LAs to install cross-pavement channels, funding for depots and NHS sites to install chargepoints for their fleets, and signage for EV

charging hubs on major A-Roads. An additional £400m has been allocated for charging infrastructure in the next Spending Review period, reaffirming the Government's commitment to supporting industry to progress in chargepoint rollout by unblocking barriers and identifying where financial and non-financial intervention is needed.

Chargepoint provision for longer journeys on motorways and major A-Roads

Charging provision on motorways and major A-roads continues to grow strongly. There are now over 5,560 open-access rapid and ultra-rapid chargepoints within one mile of the SRN (April 2025, Zapmap), including 1,190 at MSAs (July 2025, industry data). These figures represent increases of 21% and 23% respectively, since the NAO cited the July 2024 position in its report, and both figures have more than trebled over the past three years. Further, the number of large 'hub' sites on and near the SRN is growing. There are now roughly 80 sites within a one-mile drive of the SRN with at least 12 public rapid or ultra-rapid charging devices (January 2025, Zapmap). However, despite this growth, there remains more to do to improve charging provision on the SRN. Around a quarter of MSAs do not yet have six ultra-rapid chargepoints. There are also 'cold spots' on the A-road network: stretches where 20 miles of range would not be sufficient to reach a site with at least six ultra-rapid charging devices. (More detail in Annex A.)

My previous letter (Annex B) noted that the nature of **government support in this area is changing**. The chargepoint industry has strengthened its capability and accelerated rollout, and the overall cost to industry of power capacity on and around the SRN is now likely to be lower than anticipated. Regulatory changes mean there is more scope for connection providers to socialise the costs of some grid upgrades, lowering the upfront cost to those wishing to install chargepoints. Also, improvements in, and the falling prices of, battery technology is offering an alternative to costly grid upgrades. We can now target government support at barriers in specific locations and no longer need the type of global intervention contemplated for the Rapid Charging Fund (RCF).

The challenge, and need for government intervention, continues to differ between motorways and A-roads. MSAs' large, fixed locations will require improved charging to avoid gaps in network provision and to demonstrate a highly visible chargepoint offer to those contemplating switching to an EV. **Major grid upgrades at some motorway sites** remain unlikely to be commercially viable in the near term. To address this, the Department is working closely and intensively with the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) and with Ofgem, the energy regulator, to identify how best to fund electricity network operators directly to strengthen networks near affected MSAs, making grid upgrades at sites more commercially viable. In doing so, we are drawing on learning from both the RCF pilot and the Green Recovery Scheme recently run by Ofgem.

In the Spending Review, the Department secured £400m to support charging infrastructure, and this will include interventions on the SRN. In terms of delivery mechanisms, we are currently considering different models with stakeholders which would either fund distribution network operators (DNOs) outside of the existing regulatory framework for grid upgrades, or in which government would act as some form of connection customer. There are challenges with both approaches. We are seeking to establish a preferred delivery mechanism this autumn. More widely, the Department is engaging DESNZ and Ofgem on connection reforms and network charges (see Annex C).

At the same time, there is also a need to overcome **short-term gaps in charging provision at MSAs** to deliver an improved baseline offer at all locations as quickly as possible. We are looking at how to support industry with innovative short-term alternatives to full grid upgrades, building on lessons from a National Highways project to roll out battery storage systems at MSAs. We and National Highways are also pursuing several non-financial interventions to support industry with planning and development at sites. These include an updated Demand Framework tool to support with capacity planning,

stakeholder engagement sessions to facilitate joint problem solving at sites, and a knowledge repository, which will be published by National Highways shortly.

On **major A-roads** (also known as All Purpose Trunk Roads), there is more flexibility about where charging can be sited, which is enabling more straightforward build-out of provision. The charging ‘cold spots’ on major A-roads that we identified last year have already reduced substantially (see Annex A, publication of analysis forthcoming). Stakeholder engagement by National Highways on eight key ‘cold spots’ suggested that planned industry investments would significantly reduce or eliminate the remainder of these key sites in the next three years. We will continue to monitor developments at these locations closely, which will include further engagement with stakeholders to help realise planned investments and understand any residual barriers. We are also exploring how best to unify publicly available data on the chargepoint investment pipeline.

Improved **signage** is now needed to help direct drivers to the greater charging provision on and around the SRN. Associated challenges differ for different types of roads. For major A-roads the Government recently announced new interim guidance to National Highways to enable it to direct drivers to new EV-only charging hubs close to the SRN for the first time. We will now undertake a market engagement exercise to determine long-term eligibility criteria (e.g. for the minimum number of chargers) for these signs for inclusion in the DfT planning circular. For the motorways, we will also be seeking stakeholder views on how best to improve signage of charging provision both at MSAs and close to motorway junctions, as well as signage within sites themselves. In doing so, we will need to ensure that the safety of road users is supported. Finally, the Department is working with an initial group of LAs to grant special authorisation to sign sites within their jurisdiction without having to seek permission from the Department for individual sites.

As the number of EVs on the road increases over the coming years, **provision across the network will need to grow further**. We are exploring whether government setting public expectations for minimum provision at key sites, such as MSAs, would support shared focus across the sector. Stakeholders, including electricity network operators, reported that, while challenging, the previous ambition to have six ultra-rapid chargepoints at each MSA had helped with planning. However, we recognise that as demand increases over the next three to five years, it will not fall equally across the network. So, in considering future provision expectations, we are looking at whether a tiered approach would work best. For example, this could mean expectation of a minimum provision of 12 chargepoints at sites with lower traffic levels, 24 at busier sites, and a challenge to industry to publicise their own ambitions for sites with the highest traffic levels.

Lastly, the adoption of **zero emission heavy goods vehicles** (ZE HGVs) will be critical to meeting our net zero targets. As with cars and vans, encouraging uptake will require visible ZE HGV infrastructure on, and near, the SRN. The £200m ZE HGV and Infrastructure Demonstrator (ZEHID) programme will deploy hundreds of ZE battery electric and hydrogen fuel cell HGVs (40 – 44 tonnes) and their associated infrastructure, including at MSAs, by March 2026. Beyond ZEHID, sector capability will be an early priority. The Government will undertake initiatives to help truckstop operators understand the process for chargepoint installation and to encourage engagement between truckstop operators, chargepoint operators (CPOs), and suppliers. Further support measures will be outlined in the forthcoming ZE HGV and Coach Infrastructure Strategy.

Progress with the LEVI Fund

The LEVI Fund has continued to make **good progress** in supporting local charging provision. As of 1 August 2025, over £324m of the £343m LEVI capital funding has been provided to LAs, and 51 of 78 projects have been approved to proceed to delivery, up from ten referenced in the NAO report as of October 2024. Of these projects:

- Fourteen were preparing to launch their procurements,
- Ten procurements were live,
- 23 were concluding procurements and appointing suppliers,
- Four contracts have been agreed, including two existing contracts.

Extensive engagement with LAs on their projects suggests that the LEVI Programme remains on track for and could exceed the forecasted provision of at least 100,000 chargepoints. As of 1 August, only one project had so far experienced a partially failed procurement: it had split its procurement into two lots, one for bollard chargepoints and the other for 'fit and flush' products. The latter lot failed to result in an agreed contract and the LA are in the process of reprocurring. They have reviewed their original tender and revised it based on market feedback.

The LEVI Fund operates a rolling application process, and we continue to review remaining applications and tender documents, with the remaining funding still available this financial year.

The Department **continues to support LAs** to deliver their LEVI projects in several ways. The LEVI Support Body (SuB) remains in place to assist LAs with their LEVI applications and delivery. The SuB is a consortium of three organisations with expertise in sustainable transport, infrastructure, and grant management. The SuB offers support services to LAs including:

- One-to-one guidance and support throughout the LEVI process, from planning to procurement, through to on-street deployment and subsequent contract management.
- In-person and online stakeholder events, including masterclasses and roadshows.
- Delivering the training programme for LA officers and supporting the digital knowledge repository.

The Department and the SuB have also worked in partnership with the Crown Commercial Service (CCS) to deliver a dedicated toolkit for public sector bodies procuring an EVI concession contract. The toolkit, owned by CCS, comprises four fully customisable support tools including an Invitation to Tender (ITT), Statement of Requirements, Commercial Response, and Concession Contract. This toolkit makes it quicker and easier for LAs to procure EV infrastructure and put good contracts in place.

To reduce the risk of failed procurements, LAs and CPOs are also regularly made aware of upcoming tenders. LAs are encouraged to lengthen their procurement windows to give the market time to respond. In doing so the programme aims to maintain momentum while supporting a coordinated approach to delivery.

The **LEVI Capability Fund** has had a significant impact on LA resourcing and expertise, with over 300 EV officers (c.220 full-time equivalents) in post. LAs will receive a further round of capability (resource) funding in financial year 2025/26 to ensure they remain resourced to plan and deliver EV infrastructure (EVI), including new approaches such as cross-pavement channels.

LAs have continued access to a bespoke EVI training course. Over 200 LA officers have benefitted from the course to date. The course has been updated in light of procurement changes, such as the commencement of the Procurement Act 2023, and a new module added on EVI implementation, reflecting LA progress. Additionally, LAs have ongoing access to an extensive online knowledge repository containing guidance and key information for each stage of EVI delivery. LAs can access a range of EVI training, including regular LEVI 'roadshows' for LA officers and bespoke commercial training.

Building on LEVI's success, the Department continues to identify gaps requiring government intervention to support EVI rollout in local areas. In July this year, the

Government announced £25m capital funding for a **new EV Pavement Channel grant** to be delivered to LAs to support the installation of EV pavement channels. Pavement channels allow residents without off-street parking, who can regularly park outside their house, to charge their vehicles using their cheaper domestic electricity supply. The grant helps to mitigate against residents trailing cables and plugs the gap in areas less viable for on-street charging. The allocation, funding, and support package follow a similar approach to the LEVI Fund, maintaining what has worked, such as fixed funding allocations, and building on what needs to change. Lessons from LEVI showed that informed engagement, resource funding and central support were essential for LAs to successfully procure and secure good value for money.

For this new fund, LAs will have continued access to the SuB, who will support the Department to administer the grant, provide support and advice to LAs, and develop best practice guidance. The application window for funding opened to eligible LAs in August and will close in October.

Lessons from LEVI are being applied beyond the immediate programme. For example, the LEVI approach to support LA capacity and capability was used to feed into a wider departmental review on how best to support LAs. The LEVI approach to supporting LAs on procurement is also being shared more widely. For example, CCS are exploring the potential to develop concession contract templates for LA services beyond EVI, as part of CCS' broader ambition to deliver "Value to the Nation". This leverages the organisation's commercial expertise to help public sector buyers to attract private sector investment in a critical policy area. This method also holds potential interest across the public sector where specific commercial support could stimulate UK growth or provide further benefits to the UK.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jo Shanmugalingam', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jo Shanmugalingam
Permanent Secretary