

**Written evidence submitted by the North East England Chamber
of Commerce (EVP0049)**

This response is submitted by the North East England Chamber of Commerce, the Chamber is the North East's leading business membership organisation. We represent more than 3,000 businesses located in Northumberland, Tyne and Wear, Durham and Tees Valley, covering both local enterprise partnership areas in North East England. Our members are drawn from all sizes of business across all sectors and employ about 30% of the region's workforce.

The North East is in a strong position to help accelerate the production of electric vehicles. The region has one of the largest automotive clusters in the UK and has 17 research and development clusters all looking at electrification of vehicles. Industry led groups such as EV North have already been set up with organisations including Avid Technology, Nissan, Marelli, Newcastle University and Hyperdrive Innovation all working to shape the future of electric vehicles in the North East. With Britishvolt also looking to create the UK's first battery Gigafactory in the North East we have the potential to bring together the region's expertise in chemicals, manufacturing, and the automotive sector to create new jobs in battery technology and electric vehicles.

However, there is still a long way to go to having diesel and petrol cars phased out. In 2019 around 58.5% of licensed cars were petrol, 39.1% diesel and 0.8% were either a plug-in-hybrid, battery electric, range-extended electric, or fuel cell electric car. In order to increase this there will need to be much more investment in charging infrastructure and a more detailed plan on incentives to make electric vehicles more affordable for people.

The North East can play a key role in the transition away from petrol and diesel cars. The Government needs to work with the automotive industry on this transition. The North East has the potential to be a world leader in manufacturing electric vehicles, but the automotive sector needs to be consulted and supported to help them take advantage of any new opportunities.

The £1.3 billion investment in charging points announced as part of the Government's 10-point plan will not be enough to create a charging network across the UK, we will need longer term investment to make charging points accessible and enable people to change to electric vehicles. A more detailed plan from Government on the steps towards a transition away from petrol and diesel cars will be needed along with investment in charging points and incentives to make electric vehicles more affordable.

Local authorities need to have the funding to work with the private sector both to install charging points but also to maintain them, previous schemes have seen charging points installed but then not enough funding for maintenance which harms the reliability of the network. Planning reforms to ensure electric vehicle charging infrastructure can be placed near key housing developments and anchor institutions in towns and cities will also be important to create a reliable network.

As well as charging infrastructure we need to ensure that our energy network can cope, the Government's energy white paper highlights investment in offshore wind, nuclear and carbon capture technology. As part of the Government's energy strategies, we need to ensure that we have the power needed for the transfer over to electric vehicles and that we can move towards

more sustainable energy to charge electric vehicles. This needs to be addressed in the Government's decarbonisation of transport report due to be published in 2021.

The Government have pledged to invest £120 million to begin the introduction of at least 4,000 zero emission buses. Decarbonising buses will be essential in reducing emission and improve air quality for local communities. This represents an opportunity for the Government and for transport operators to collaborate on challenge of reducing emissions.

We have seen the first electric buses rolled out in the region as part of a £3.7million joint-funded project from Go North East and the Government's Ultra-Low Emission Bus Fund, following a bid that was also supported by Nexus and Gateshead Council. Funding like this is essential as it helps to support some of the additional costs of electric vehicles over diesel equivalents and the charging infrastructure needed at bus stations.

As well as the funding there needs to be work to create the supply chain needed in the North East and the UK to be able to ensure that we have the capacity to build the necessary batteries and charging infrastructure here. This needs to be included in the Government's decarbonising transport report as much of the focus so far has been on electric cars rather than other vehicles. This presents the opportunity to create more jobs and investment in the UK as part of a green recovery.

Hydrogen is key to the North East with the Tees Valley hosting the UK's first hydrogen transport hub in partnership with Teesside University along with the Net Zero Innovation Centre. Teesside is currently responsible for half of the UK's hydrogen capacity, producing 15 TWh per year. The Government need to include in its decarbonisation of transport report a plan of how to use the innovation sites in the North East to trial hydrogen as an alternative fuel.

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