

# South of Scotland regional plan for EV roll-out

**West Lothian is to work with neighbouring councils to develop a region-wide plan to develop charging infrastructure for electric vehicles.**

Edinburgh council is the lead local authority in a group which includes immediate neighbours in Falkirk, Mid and East Lothian as well as the Scottish Borders, Dumfries and Galloway, and Fife.

The agreement comes despite the fall in the numbers using existing EV charging points and a slowdown in the sale of EVs.

The council's Energy and Climate Manager stressed that the plans were proposals across eight council areas for infrastructure as the use of electric vehicles grows in the longer term.

The council estimates that it would cost around £3.2million to fully equip West Lothian with EV infrastructure, the majority of which would be private sector investment.

Councillor Pauline Stafford asked: "With the inter authority agreement will we have any control of the charges that we set, and do we also have any control over the number of chargers?"

Peter Rogers said yes on both counts, the council will have control of any tariffs set, the locations are largely set out in the council's plans from 2023 but there is flexibility

around.

He added: "We have been working with Scottish Power behind the scenes, and they are comfortable that it can be done quite feasibly."

Councillor Stafford said "A lot of the usage figures are low. Why are we looking to expand when the figures at existing sites are so low? Do we think they are going to improve?"

Mr Rogers answered that delays to the phasing out of petrol engines had probably added to the delay in sale of EVs but the expectation was that long term the legislation would drive the sale of electric vehicles.

"The rise in demand has not come through as anticipated but with the length of contract the forecast increase will come, and I suppose there is the argument that there will be people who aren't moving to electric vehicles because the infrastructure isn't currently there who will once the infrastructure is provided locally."

Councillor Veronica Smith asked about the variance in charging costs where those with homes charging points could charge a vehicle for 7p while street charging could cost 48p. Mr Rogers said that councils hoped to even out the costs as the charging network developed

Councillors on West Lothian's Executive welcomed news of the progress on a joint regional project which will help keep costs down as the public Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure (EVCI) develops.

Councillor Sally Pattle told the meeting: "This is very exciting. I just want to say congratulations this is a fantastic example of how local authorities have regionally clubbed together to get best value for consumers. Well done for less money."

Transport accounts for over 35% of the total emissions for the West Lothian area and is the only sector where significant decreases have not been achieved since 2012/13.

Based on an initial assessment, Transport Scotland have indicated that there could be an allocation of up to £520,000 to support delivery across West Lothian. An application has been prepared and submitted to Transport Scotland for review.

Around £5.9million of grant from Transport Scotland is available to the South East of Scotland (SoS- EVICP) area as a whole.

The proposed procurement seeks to leverage this grant to attract approximately £28 million of private investment to the regional area. At this stage, there is no expectation that the council would be required to provide any additional funding.

Mr Rogers said that any agreement would look for long term contracts of 15 to 20 years. A variety of options for service providers will be considered. West Lothian's own EV Infrastructure plan was first published in 2023.

By Stuart Sommerville, Local Democracy Reporter