

Government powers up electric vehicle revolution with £20 million chargepoints boost

- streets up and down the country set for more electric vehicle chargepoints thanks to multimillion-pound government investment
- Transport Secretary urges local councils to take advantage of the scheme as more drivers make the switch to electric
- funding could double the number of on-street chargepoints government is supporting to nearly 8,000

Local authorities are being urged to take advantage of a £20 million cash injection to boost the number of on-street electric vehicle chargepoints in towns and cities across the UK.

In a letter to councils across Britain, Transport Secretary Grant Shapps has today (2 February 2021) announced that funding for the [On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme \(ORCS\)](#) will continue into 2021/22, allowing residents without private parking to reliably charge their vehicle.

Since its inception in 2017, more than 140 local authority projects have benefitted from the scheme, which has supported applications for nearly 4,000 chargepoints across the UK. This funding boost could double that, adding nearly 4000 more chargepoints in our towns and cities, tackling poor air quality and supporting economic growth as we build back greener from the pandemic.

Local councils play an essential role in providing electric vehicle infrastructure and so in partnership with [Energy Saving Trust](#), the Department for Transport is welcoming applications from councils which are yet to apply for funding, as well as those that have already benefitted.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

From Cumbria to Cornwall, drivers across the country should benefit from the electric vehicle revolution we're seeing right now.

With a world-leading charging network, we're making it easier for more people to switch to electric vehicles, creating healthier neighbourhoods and cleaning up our air as we build back greener.

The UK is already a global frontrunner in the shift to electric vehicles. The Prime Minister's [Ten Point Plan](#) set out that we will accelerate the transition to electric vehicles, ending the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2030, which could create 40,000 extra jobs by 2030, and transforming our national infrastructure to better support electric vehicles, backed by a total of £2.8 billion and supporting around 169,000 jobs. Of this funding, £1.3 billion is set to be invested in charging infrastructure over the next 4 years.

Nick Harvey, senior programme manager at Energy Saving Trust, said:

The confirmation of £20 million of funding for the ORCS in 2021/22 is great news. This funding will allow local authorities to install convenient and cost-effective electric vehicle charging infrastructure for those who rely on on-street parking. This helps to support the fair transition to the increased adoption of low carbon transport.

We're therefore encouraging local authorities to access this funding as part of their plans to decarbonise transport and improve local air quality.

[Government announces £50 million to support students impacted by Covid-19](#)

Thousands of students will benefit from an additional £50 million to support them with financial pressures from the pandemic, the Universities Minister has announced today (2 February).

Today's announcement is in addition to the £20 million announced in December, bringing the total to £70 million for this financial year.

The new funding means that universities will be able to help students impacted by the pandemic, for example those facing additional costs for alternative accommodation, loss of employment, or extra costs to access their teaching online. Universities will distribute the funding and will be able to prioritise the funding to those most in need of help.

The increased financial support comes as the majority of students have been asked to continue their studies remotely, as part of measures to reduce the transmission of coronavirus.

This announcement follows the decision from many universities and accommodation providers to offer rent rebates for students who need stay away

from their term-time address. The Government has encouraged others to join them and offer students partial refunds.

Universities Minister Michelle Donelan said:

This continues to be an incredibly difficult and challenging time for our students, and I am hugely grateful to all the university staff working hard to prioritise their health, wellbeing and learning during this pandemic.

The additional £50 million that we are announcing today will mean we have distributed £70m for hardship in this financial year alone – on top of the £256m of government-funded student premium which universities can use for student support this academic year.

This additional support will provide real, tangible help for those students struggling financially as a result of the pandemic.

We will continue to prioritise a full return to education as soon possible, in line with public health advice. I am also working with universities and professional bodies to ensure students can graduate as planned.

The Government also welcomes the decision from many universities and accommodation providers to offer rent rebates for students who need stay away from their term-time address, and encourages other to join them and offer students partial refunds. It asks all providers of student accommodation including universities, to make sure their rental policies have students' best interests at heart and are communicated clearly.

The funding will be distributed by the Office for Students directly to universities, which are best placed to assess student hardship locally. Universities will be able to help students, including international students, impacted by the pandemic, for example those facing additional costs arising from having to maintain accommodation in more than one location, or an inability to maintain employment, such as a job based close to their term-time accommodation for which they cannot access the furlough scheme, or to support students to access teaching remotely.

The Government continues to monitor the situation and the impact of the funding.

Students facing financial hardship are encouraged to contact their university or higher education provider if they find themselves facing financial difficulties related to Covid-19.

British Ambassador visits Chiquimula

World news story

The British Ambassador in Guatemala, Nick Whittingham, visited the eastern part of the country to keep abreast of challenges posed by climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic and immigration.



This is the first visit of the Ambassador to Chiquimula. Last year, the department suffered the impact of two storms, which destroyed key infrastructure and damaged livelihoods. Most recently, the department saw the arrival of many Honduran immigrants travelling north, whilst the authorities also are coping with the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ambassador Whittingham discussed these issues in meetings with local authorities. He met with the Governor of Chiquimula, Ferlandy Mario Roberto Caceres Palma; the Mayor, Rolando Aquino; and representatives of the academic community, including the National University's Eastern Centre (CUNORI).

The Ambassador stressed the UK's commitment to keep working with Guatemala on tackling climate change to prevent and mitigate the impacts of extreme weather. This will be critical during this year's Global Conference on Climate Change (COP26), hosted by the UK, and an opportunity to explain Guatemala's vulnerabilities and environmental commitments.

Finally, Ambassador Whittingham emphasised the importance of bolstering free trade between our economies to overcome the impacts of the pandemic, whilst we continue protecting our populations. As from 1 January of 2021, the UK has in force a free trade agreement with Central America due to further spur Guatemalan exports, such as well-demanded fruits produced in this part of the country.

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Joint Statement Following Quad Meeting

Press release

Today the Minister of State for Northern Ireland Robin Walker MP and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Simon Coveney TD, jointly chaired a conference call with the First Minister Arlene Foster, deputy First Minister Michelle O'Neill, Health Minister Robin Swann and Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly to discuss the ongoing response to Covid-19.



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All of the participants acknowledged the very difficult situation being experienced by many in the recent weeks, especially those who have lost family members and loved ones to Covid-19. They expressed their deep gratitude for the continued remarkable dedication and efforts of health workers, front line workers and all working to respond to this pandemic.

They discussed the latest developments in the collective effort to combat the pandemic, and the need to continue the close cooperation between the Northern Ireland Executive, the Irish Government and the UK Government in order to best manage the increasingly serious pressures facing healthcare, and the importance of providing clear messaging to the public.

They considered the latest positions in terms of Covid-19 restrictions with a view to adopting similar approaches wherever possible.

They reaffirmed the need for continued cooperation and coordination, including with regard to international travel restrictions, in order to limit the spread of Covid-19.

All participants agreed to continue to meet regularly in this format, in addition to the ongoing regular engagement between Health Ministers, Chief Medical Officers and relevant Ministers on specific issues.

Myanmar Ambassador summoned in response to military coup and unlawful imprisonment of civilians

Press release

The Myanmar Ambassador to the UK was summoned to the FCDO today (1 February 2021).



A Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office spokesperson said:

Today the Myanmar Ambassador, Kyaw Zwar Minn, was summoned to the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office. The Minister for Asia, Nigel Adams, condemned the military coup and unlawful imprisonment of civilians, including Aung San Suu Kyi. Minister Adams requested assurances of the safety of all those detained and called for their immediate release.

The Minister for Asia made clear the democratic wishes of the people of Myanmar must be respected, and the National Assembly peacefully re-convened. He also said that the UK would work with like-minded partners and pursue all necessary diplomatic levers to ensure a peaceful return to democracy.