

Written evidence submitted by David Gregory in a personal capacity

1 - Background

My name is David Gregory and I have been driving since I was aged 12 when I bought my first car. Since then I reached a total of 10 cars that I owned at any one time, so to say I am a 'petrol head' is fairly accurate.

2 - Present

In the last year we have moved onto leasing a BMW i3 (with the range extender option). In the last 12 months we have been using this we have covered almost 10,000 miles on the roads. The reasoning for us choosing the range extender model was largely due to the capacity of the battery and taking into account the distance my parents live from our property (this is around 250 miles).

By and large we have managed to avoid using the range extender option on this car, this is all apart from one occasion when it was needed to cover the final 10 miles of a long distance journey where the last two chargers en-route were not working! We have therefore not bought any petrol/diesel in the last 12 months. Leasing the model containing the range extending engine was at an additional cost over and above the fully electric model as you would expect. At the time the lease commenced we had a one-year-old daughter who did not appreciate travelling in cars and so the option to continue on our journey if it suited where we were with the level of battery charge on longer trips made this a necessary option.

As previously stated we have actually only used this once for around 10 miles over a distance of around 10,000 miles although on this singular occasion we would have been truly stuck and needed to use a recovery service should we have chosen the all electric model.

We are fortunate in that we were relatively late in the adoption of an EV in comparison with some of the other commenters and supporters. This means that the model we lease has a pure electric range of around 120 – 140 miles (dependant upon driving style and the weather for elements such as air conditioning or heating etc).

The car then also has the range extender engine fitted which is a 600cc petrol engine, which never directly drives the wheels, but merely serves to recharge the battery itself. This option can effectively gain an extra 60 – 80 miles and therefore negates any issues that may have been caused due to defective chargers.

I am fully supportive of the concept of the bill and am very happy that it is being so openly discussed, although as with some of the other responses there are some additions that would be wonderful to see.

3 - The Future vehicle for our family

Our lease agreement for the current vehicle ends in another 12 months and we are expecting a second child in March 2018 and so this will likely shift our current choice of lease to something larger to necessitate more luggage space required.

The current problem lies in the fact that I would be very hesitant to lease a battery only version of any vehicle unless significant mileage increases could be shown. I appreciate that these are being demonstrated with some of the recent announcements/releases, although until this is at a suitable level I would be hesitant to opt for this route.

This is actually not down to the batteries/vehicles themselves, but instead the charging infrastructure. As has been pointed out by some of the commenters on this bill the need for a well distributed charging arrangement in the UK is essential.

4 - Payment/access methods for chargers

At present 'Ecotricity' chargers are the only public charging service that we use, although I can fully appreciate from the other comments and users that the need for membership in order to access these is very frustrating. Ecotricity relies on the use of a mobile phone app and I appreciate that not everybody is likely to have such a device. I believe that simply making contactless payment with a debit/credit card mandatory point on all new chargers being installed would overcome this issue.

Ideally a retro fitting scheme could also be encouraged (within a certain timescale from the bill being initiated). This would then make all the chargers be brought up-to-date and simplify the system for any newcomers to the world of EV's.

The inclusion of a contactless payment facility would reduce any costs associated with RFID cards/tags as it is something available to everyone without a special request.

5 - Types and number of chargers

Our current issue with the use of rapid chargers (50 kW) being used on the Ecotricity network is that these do not all support 'CCS' charging, which is used by our current BMW. Again this works both ways in that users with a Nissan Leaf require a different connection from the BMW.

As it stands we have had to form a list of rapid chargers for routes up and down the country depending on where you are going to from, however this can be as restrictive currently to say that a CCS charger will be present on the North side of the motorway whereas the South bound services might not have a CCS charger. In some locations it is not possible to navigate to the other side of the motorway without proceeding to a formal junction, which could be miles away!

I appreciate that this bill is looking to invest and review the current and future rates of charge as well as the locations and types, and so the need for multiple chargers in these locations is an absolute must in our eyes before we were to go for a fully electric model of car.

There is a further element to this in that the current cars offering a 'range extending' capability are very few and far between as this technology never uses the engine to physically drive the wheels and therefore the size of engine can be greatly reduced. This is not the same as a plug-in hybrid electric vehicle (PHEV) such as a Prius etc and as far as I currently understand it the only car available in the UK offering this is the BMW i3. As mentioned we have completed more than 99.9% of our driving this year on purely electric only.

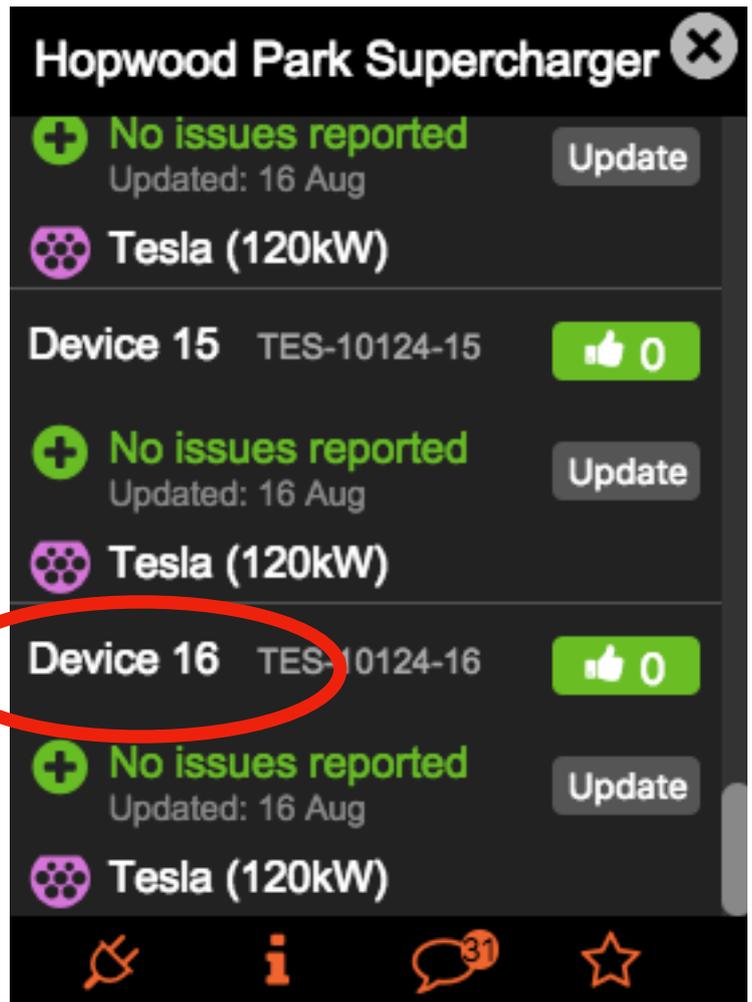
The size of chargers is also set to change already as a Porsche capable of charging at 350kW has been announced earlier this year, putting our 50kW versions to shame. This leads me onto the Tesla chargers dotted around the country -

The Tesla 'Superchargers' are rated at 120kW and typically are found in banks of 4 or more with some locations having been fitted with 16 chargers or more as seen at Hopwood services on the M42.

Imagine the frustration when finding out the single CCS charger that we can use for our BMW i3 in this location was broken, but that there were 16 other car chargers available on the site - but not compatible with our car!

There has also been an article today about a 40 point Tesla charging station being unveiled in the USA

This is in addition to the 50 strong charger station currently under construction in Shanghai, China.



6 - Enforcement for chargers being blocked

There is an additional issue with rapid chargers (50 kW) which shows that there are a number of occasions where people have been blocked from using these by drivers of diesel and petrol cars. In some instances this has been done with malice and seems to be a point of humour, without realising that this may be the sole point of fuel for a given car.

Stronger enforcement methods are required for this and also clever placement of new chargers is essential. In some instances the Ecotricity chargers found along the M5 corridor are cited adjacent to disabled parking bays and so these are the closest car parking spaces to the venue. Whilst this is obviously very convenient and also helps to advertise the cause, it does increase the risk of being abused.

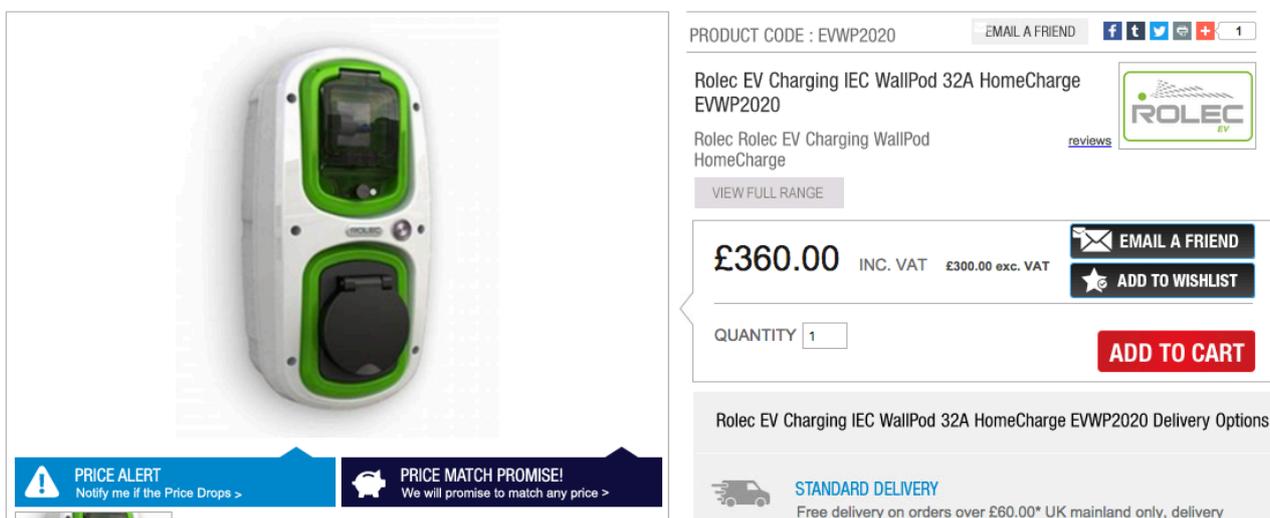
As with many occasions about the 'parent and child' spaces being abused in a similar manner it is not essential for these chargers to be located immediately next to the doorway of the venue, but merely to have the option to use these somewhere on the site.

Personally speaking these could be mixed so that there are some adjacent to the disabled areas so that these are suitable for disabled drivers using EV's and also at the opposing ends of these car parks so that these are less likely to be abused by petrol/diesel drivers by accident. It should however be borne in mind that stronger penalties could be issued for these offences as they can be very frustrating indeed when they occur.

7 - Planning

I will echo the comments from others regarding the installation of new charging points being made mandatory for new houses/new housing estates. I run an architectural design company in Gloucestershire and so this is something I try to encourage my clients to do when looking at building new houses, although in my view there is very little to stop this becoming a mandatory commitment from a Planning perspective in my view.

Residential chargers are currently available for as little as £400 (without any government investment, see below). It is certainly feasible that these could be fitted to the most new properties in the UK as the average house price is ever increasing. It may of course not be deemed suitable to request that every new property with a drive/garage is fitted with one, but perhaps a percentage for the number of new houses being built would be a better approach so that a communal area could be fitted with a certain number of chargers per group of houses i.e. one charger for every two/three houses for example. In the overall scheme of a house sale, personally I cannot see that the addition of a sub- £1000 cost to the price of a new house as be significant.



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Another element in the planning remit would be to encourage new offices and also office refurbishments to adopt multiple 'destination chargers' when being constructed/refitted. The advantage with a destination charger is the cost, as these can be installed for very little money if done en-masse. This would be an attractive way to encourage employees who commute to an office five days per week and once having arrived at the office of their workplace they then are parked for the remainder of the day (5-7 hours).

As a destination charging point this could be worked into the contracts of any employees using electric vehicles as an encouragement/benefit. On a standard electricity tariff, the cost to refill a Nissan Leaf or BMW i3 or around £2-3 if charged from empty, so again in the scheme of things, this is a very small addition to most company margins.

8 - Cost per kWh

As others have pointed out the cost per kWh proposed by Shell for their forecourt chargers being installed seems prohibitively expensive and is instantly comparable with the cost of running a diesel car (therefore not much incentive to switch). The concept that these should be priced more in line with the residential tariff, albeit that I appreciate the cost and expense of installing one of the units on a site is substantial.

9 - Summary

To summarise, I agree with the aims and intentions of this bill, although as some others have mentioned I do not feel that it currently goes far enough to provide charging far and wide to all types and sizes of vehicles.

The need for us to move to an all electric vehicle set in my eyes is clear-cut as we live by a road (as do many people).

In terms of the cost to run an electric vehicle this is greatly reduced from our previous car, which was prone to various failures over the years we owned this. This is largely due to the majority of our charging being done at home, although from an incentive perspective, the argument that 95% + of our charging is done at home does not satisfy people who have become accustomed to the ease of using petrol and diesel on a weekly (or more often) basis.

It is truly a chicken and egg scenario, although I feel that once people understand the simplicity of these vehicles (in relative terms, due to the minimum number of moving parts) as well as the relative certainty of the cost of fuel, when charged at home, the uptake of these vehicles could be fairly swift, but not until the charging infrastructure is heavily populated with well serviced units this will not be seen.

Thank you for taking the time to read my response on this bill and I do hope that some of these points are helpful to give you a good guide from someone who has been using one for the past 12 months as the only vehicle in the household.

Please feel free to contact me if you wish to discuss any of these points in any more detail as to how these might be interpreted and/or initiated.

With thanks

David Gregory