

Electric vehicle charging in Wales

About Royal Mail

As the UK's sole designated Universal Service Provider for post, Royal Mail is proud to deliver a 'one price goes anywhere' service on a range of letters and parcels to over 30 million addresses (including 1.3 million businesses) across the UK, six-days-a-week.

Royal Mail's experience

Royal Mail has deployed 100 electric vans around the UK, including six in Cardiff. This is the largest single deployment yet in the UK. We have learned a great deal about deploying at scale from this deployment, and hope to deliver further investment in the years ahead.

Royal Mail does not currently use public charging infrastructure. We need sole use of charging equipment to ensure we can deliver the Universal Service to the high standards to which we are held. We may find that, as our fleet expands, we do start to use public charging infrastructure. The key requirement for any user of an electric vehicle is interoperable public charging equipment. Whether as a private motorist or a fleet manager, drivers of electric vehicles should not need to worry about whether or not a charge point has the right sort of charging capability or payment method.

One of the key criteria for selecting where to deploy vehicles in our first large deployment was the Authorised Supply Limit at each site. We were careful to stay below this limit, which we treated as setting how many vehicles we can simultaneously charge without triggering a cost from our Distribution Network Operator. This initially constrained us to six electric vans at any site but we are keeping this under review as we learn more. For any larger scale deployment, there needs to be a fair solution to enabling fleet operators to expand their use of electric vehicles without triggering large costs, which acts as a very significant potential barrier to investment.

Other issues we have faced include:

- supply of vehicles, which was quite constrained but is improving;
- property considerations, especially on sites to which we do not own the freehold;
- business case, with electric vans two to three times the price of a new Euro 6 compliant diesel.

Local Electricity Grid resilience is key

While these other issues are pertinent, local electricity grid resilience is probably the most important to tackle, since vehicle supply and cost are improving rapidly. One very appealing technology solution is smart charging, whereby charging equipment manages how much it draws from the distribution network according to how much there is available short of the Authorised Supply Limit. This is an emerging area and one that could be extremely helpful in enabling larger scale rollout.



Grŵp y Post Brenhinol Royal Mail Group

As the volume of electric vehicles on the road increases, including our fleet, the electricity grid will need to adapt. We are confident that National Grid and the DNOs are well aware of the challenge, not least in the long term decarbonisation of transport, addressed in the Department for Transport's recent Road to Zero strategy.

How to fairly spread the cost is a key concern for us as a fleet operator. We appreciate that the users of infrastructure will always pay in the end, but the current problem is how this is distributed, and how a very large cost can fall on one business.

This is an area the Welsh Government could play a helpful role in. Working with the DNOs, for example exploring with them what regulatory barriers and constraints exist and how to surmount them, would be a productive way to encourage take-up to grow in Wales.

