



To:

**Councillor Andrea Lewis, Cabinet Member
for Service Transformation**

BY EMAIL

cc Cabinet Members

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Summary: This is a letter from the Climate Change and Nature Scrutiny Performance Panel to the Cabinet Member for Service Transformation following the meeting of the Panel on 30 January 2024. It covers Public Electric Vehicle Charging Provision. A formal written response is not required.

Dear Cllr Lewis

The Panel met on 30 January 2024 and received a briefing on Public Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Provision.

We would like to thank you, Mark Wade, Stuart Davies, Matthew Bowyer and Ioan Brannigan for attending to present the item and answer the Panel's questions. We appreciate your engagement and input.

We are writing to you to reflect on what we learned from the discussion, share the views of the Panel, and, where necessary, raise any issues or recommendations for your consideration and response.

Public Electric Vehicle Charging Provision

You provided an overview of this issue and stated that you are doing everything you can within the limitation of the grants received and the hope is that once there is sufficient penetration, the private sector will take over and start installing their own charge points to help the public.

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY / TROSOLWG A CHRAFFU

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We asked if you have investigated installation of EV slow charging points on lamp posts, which is something being used in many European cities, and if there are any plans to trial it anywhere. We heard you are not able to do this at the current time for several reasons. Firstly, areas like London have had significant grant funding. Also, most of Swansea's lighting columns are fed from the Council's privately owned cables that are not powered directly from the Electricity Board cables, which means they are only powered during the hours of darkness, so would not be able to charge during the day. We heard there also concerns about additional load, and many of the lighting columns are located as the back of the footpath as opposed to on the curb, so there would still be a need for trailing cables. In addition, current unmetered supply agreements do not allow the Council to sell its energy. Another difficulty is people feeling they 'own' the space outside their property. Officers stated they have spoken to Transport for Wales about undertaking some on-street residential trials, but this would be a separate piece of infrastructure with a separate electricity supply.

We asked what is being done in terms of engaging with the private sector to help out and put in its own infrastructure, for example petrol stations and local supermarkets with car parks. We heard you wrote to local main chain supermarkets a number of years ago encouraging them to do this, but only one responded and decided at the time not to put infrastructure in. We were pleased to hear there is now some charging infrastructure in some of our local supermarket car parks. You stated you are happy to commit to writing out to local supermarkets again to try and influence them, but as a Council we have no control over what they do. In terms of petrol stations, you stated that you believe there is an action plan for installing EV charging, which they will have to do at some point, but you are not sure of the timing of this. We noted that as a commercial sector this is also outside of the Council's control.

We queried if you have looked into using community buildings for installation of EV charging points, for example churches and community centres. Officers confirmed it has been investigated, the Council ran a survey at the end of last year for EV owners to see where the highest areas of demand for this are. However, you are not seeing clusters of demand which would justify installing these, as the Council is in partnership with a commercial operator and it would need to pay for itself. We were pleased to hear that when areas are identified where there is demand for infrastructure, you will seek to put it in.

We asked if community organisations could get a grant to install EV charging, and in the long term could possibly earn income from it. We heard from officers the grants available require a significant element of grant funding, up to 50%, which the community organisations would have to find, and it is a large sum of money. We asked if it is worth the Council doing a piece of work on contacting community organisations, churches etc which have buildings that are suitable for EV installations to see if any are interested in installing it, as there may be some organisations that will have the match funding for grants. You agreed to consider this.

We asked why EV charging installations cannot be put on private land with the owner's consent, for example the shopping precinct in Killay, where Council owned short stay parking bays at the front of the precinct have been identified but the private car park at the back would be more suitable. We were informed it is much easier in terms of planning, liability, and licencing if Council land is used which you have full control over. We also heard you have had limited success with grant funding so have had to

concentrate it on Council owned areas, as there are difficulties if you start to 'lease spaces' in a private car park as you would be at the mercy of the provider who could inflate lease costs.

We stated that in terms of destination car parks along the Gower Road corridor going west, the nearest car park is Port Eynon, so there is a huge gap in provision, unless people stop off in the City Centre. We added that if EV charging points were on the other side of the road to the precinct there would not be a gap in provision for people going west towards Gower. We were informed that as well as Port Eynon, the private sector is installing charge points in the car park in Kittle, which is positive in taking EV to Gower.

We feel there needs to be a mix of slow and fast charging installations, for example at community venues and suggested slow chargers rather than fast chargers are used for overnight charging, if possible, so there is less pressure on the grid and there is less cost to install. We were informed the first phase of funding targeted more rapid charging, as infrastructure was located near shops and was to encourage people to dwell in that area. You agreed that if there are car parks where people can charge overnight, slow charging could be an option. Officers agreed to look into it to identify the need for this type of overnight parking.

We queried if information is available on usage of EV charging installations for all car parks in the area and heard usage, total consumption etc is monitored for all charge points in Council car parks.

We were interested to hear if the Council has a plan for generating and storing electricity on current or future sites to reduce carbon, for example taking it from the grid and storing in off peak times or generating power via solar or wind at a site and storing it there. We heard the Council's current EV charging infrastructure uses 100% renewable energy. In terms of generating on site, we heard the Council is currently in the process of installing its first rapid charge hub in Oxford Street car park. This will have a solar canopy and battery storage. We noted that how much the solar panels supply will depend entirely on how fast people are charging and that solar panels provide a useful function in balancing out the load on the grid.

We discussed the EV charging points in the underground car park at the Guildhall and the need to look at installing points in the Rotunda car park to make it more accessible. We believe there is also a need to consider members of the public using it in the evening, not just Council staff. You stated the Sustainable Transport Strategy is looking at this in terms of customer and staff accessible EV charging infrastructure at Council sites but you are not sure of the timescale.

We are keen on the idea that people going into work can charge their cars whilst at work and queried if this idea is being progressed. We were informed current charging infrastructure is specifically for the Council fleet. However, the team is looking at a software package which will allow a member of staff with a card to use the EV charging infrastructure when it is available and pay for electricity that they use via the card. This would be on sites where the Council has charging infrastructure but there are some challenges.

We expressed concern that some people cannot install EV charge points outside their home, such as terraced housing. We heard this is why the Council has decided to also focus on more urban shopping centres and districts to help bridge the gap for these people. We discussed how it is not only people in terraced houses who have problems, for example garages being located a long way from the electric meter and people living in tower blocks. We heard vehicle manufacturers can offer homeowners advice on home charging and there are also organisations such as the Energy Savings Trust. We also heard that in terms of Council estates where there might be tower blocks or communal areas for parking, where possible the Council might look to put EV charging infrastructure in those communal areas.

We queried if other sources of energy are being looked at to run vehicles in the future. We noted the Council is currently involved in hydrogen bus pilots. We heard lots of research is going on into low carbon fuels that could power vehicles. We also heard technologies are advancing in terms of battery storage and types of materials used for batteries are improving and the Authority will look to see what technologies are coming forward and adapt accordingly.

We queried if there could be an opportunity in future of recycling car batteries in the Swansea area. We heard you will watch closely what others are doing and will look at good practice. You stated you are aware of car batteries being reused, for example as a home battery and this is something the Council could work with universities on. We added that there is a company in Llanelli which repurposes EV batteries for home usage.

Your Response

We hope that you find the contents of this letter helpful and would welcome comments on any of the issues raised within. We do not require a formal written response on this occasion but would be pleased to receive any feedback on progress with the action points below which you have agreed:

- To write out to local supermarkets to encourage them to install EV charging.
- To consider contacting community organisations about installing EV charging.
- To investigate the need for overnight parking provision for slow charging.

Yours sincerely

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