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# Delivering EV charging infrastructure: The local government perspective

19 September 2024 Alex Kynoch

As the United Kingdom strides towards its goal of achieving net-zero emissions by 2050, local authorities find themselves at the heart of a transformative journey, particularly in the realm of regeneration and transportation.

Charging infrastructure is a key pillar in the government's strategy to move to zero-emission cars and vans and local government is ideally placed to deliver or facilitate this key infrastructure.

For local authorities, the push towards electric vehicles (**EVs**) and the necessary charging infrastructure is not just about adhering to national and international climate goals; it's about leading the charge in removing one of the most significant barriers to electric vehicle adoption—the availability of reliable charging points. This challenge presents both a responsibility and an opportunity. By enhancing the electric vehicle charging infrastructure, local authorities can significantly influence the public's perception and real-world feasibility of transitioning to electric vehicles, thereby accelerating the UK's journey towards a decarbonised transport sector. As such, we have highlighted key challenges and opportunities for local authorities when looking to deliver electric vehicle infrastructure.

## Structure of EV infrastructure

When local authorities evaluate options to enhance their electric vehicle charging infrastructure, they must typically consider two structures for the arrangement: a directive approach or a concession agreement. The directive approach involves the local authority retaining ownership and operational control, with the operator responsible for building and maintaining the charging points. This model suits local authorities with specific requirements for their electric vehicle infrastructure, offering them operational freedom but also leaving them with the majority of the risk. Conversely, a concession agreement allows the local authority to grant operators the right to develop, construct and manage the electric vehicle charging network on its land in exchange for payment, usually in the form of a land use fee and/or a share of revenue. This approach shifts the operational risks and maintenance responsibilities to the operator, providing a way for local authorities to benefit from external expertise and reduce their risk exposure.

## DNO connections

When local authorities plan to expand their electric vehicle charging infrastructure, the arrangements with Distribution Network Operators (**DNOs**) for electricity connections are key. Depending on the scale and nature of the infrastructure, additional substations or grid reinforcement may be required and either the local authority or the operator will need to manage the connection process. It is crucial to note that installing new charging points can be costly and time-consuming with, particularly in rural areas, grid capacity issues posing challenges. The cost and time to connect vary by location and may require significant grid upgrades to meet the increased demand.

## Exclusivity

In planning electric vehicle infrastructure, exclusivity is also key. Operators may seek an exclusivity agreement with local authorities to prevent competition on or close to a site they have invested in – particularly where they have borne the DNO connection costs. Where exclusivity is appropriate (which will certainly not always be the case) this should be limited to the minimum necessary to protect the operator's investment and local authorities should consider any circumstances in which the exclusivity will be removed, any controls on pricing and any political issues with resident/user choice being limited.

# End of term and ownership

As the lease and/or agreement nears its end, careful consideration should be given to the future of the technology involved. Given the rapid pace of technological advancement, assessing the potential value and relevance of the charging infrastructure after the economic lifetime of the equipment is crucial. This evaluation should guide the decision-making process surrounding the disposition of the charging points at the agreement's conclusion. Local authorities need to deliberate on whether assuming ownership of the charging stations aligns with their long-term strategic goals or whether it would be preferable for the operator to dismantle and remove the equipment.

# Legislation

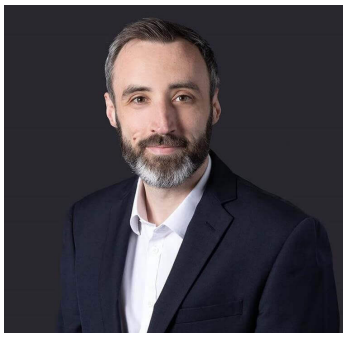
Local authorities must also be mindful of legislation concerning electric vehicle charging infrastructure. A host of specific regulations apply to the design, installation and operation of electric vehicle charging infrastructure. These include:

- **The Alternative Fuel Infrastructure Regulations 2017**, establishing common standards for connectors and outlets, ensuring open access and intelligent metering and promoting transparency on charge point locations.
- **The Electric Vehicle (Smart Charge Points) Regulations 2021**, requiring smart functionality and cybersecurity standards.
- **Public Charge Point Regulations 2023**, imposing requirements for rapid charge points to be reliable ensuring pricing and data transparency and aiming to simplify payment.
- Local authorities undertaking wider projects will also need to be mindful of changes to **Building Regulations** which require the installation of electric vehicles charge points for certain new buildings and major renovations.
- **Electricity licensing framework**, the rules on supplying electricity to third parties either under a licence or an exemption will also apply.

# Conclusion

Local authorities are at the forefront of driving the UK's ambitious shift towards net-zero emissions by 2050, with a particular focus on developing electric vehicle charging infrastructure. With their regional and local knowledge and functions, local authorities are perfectly placed to deliver the infrastructure required to transition to zero-emissions vehicles, whether as part of wider regeneration plans or otherwise. Making electric vehicle adoption more feasible and attractive will accelerate the UK's progress towards a decarbonised transport sector and a sustainable future.

# Key contact




## Alex Kynoch

Partner

alex.kynoch@brownejacobson.com

+44 (0)115 976 6511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