



Electric Vehicle Association Northern Ireland

Briefing Paper for the Department for Infrastructure Committee, May 2021

Our group was originally formed as the Northern Ireland EV Owners (NIEVO) in 2016. In March 2021 we completed the transition to a Community Interest Company - Electric Vehicle Association Northern Ireland CIC (EVA NI for short).

With a board of 5 directors this not-for-profit company's aims are two-fold. Firstly to represent the interests of electric vehicle users in Northern Ireland by being a collective voice, working with stakeholders, highlighting specific issues around ownership and use of EVs and their infrastructure. Secondly to promote electric vehicle use in Northern Ireland by increasing public awareness of the advantages of owning and driving EVs and the benefits of their use to the environment and society.

Currently we represent around 1,000 EV drivers here, of the approximately 4,000 plugin vehicles in Northern Ireland. We are working on an official membership program which will launch later this year as our organisation grows. This will allow us to hold events to promote EVs as well as educate new and potential buyers on all aspects of ownership including home and public charging.

We are members of the EV Alliance UK and Ireland and regularly meet with our counterparts from all regions of these islands.

Lobbying for Change

The work of our group has been focused around lobbying for the urgent improvement required to our public charging network here. Over the past 4 years our group has engaged with many stakeholders (over 40 in 2021 alone) including;

- DfI
- DfE
- MLAs from the 5 largest parties
- 11 Local Councils
- NI Utility Regulator
- ESB
- NIE Networks
- Energy Providers
- East Border Region
- OZEV (Office for Zero Emission Vehicles)
- EST (Energy Saving Trust)
- CBI Northern Ireland
- Major Car Dealerships
- Translink
- Tourism NI
- Taxi Operators
- EV Alliance UK & Ireland

100 Times Growth

We support active travel and public transport and also firmly believe in the need for choice. 1 in 3 people in Northern Ireland live rurally and that is increasing. According to the Travel Survey for Northern Ireland 2017-2019 published by DfI¹, 71% of all journeys here are by car, covering 83% of distance travelled. The car is a lifeline for many.

NIE Networks have estimated that there could be around 400,000 electric vehicles on the roads in Northern Ireland by 2030, at which point the UK government has proposed banning the sale of purely combustion engine vehicles. However, our electric vehicle charging infrastructure is not fit for purpose for the 4,000 EVs here - never mind 100 times that.

The Current Network

The network has been in such steep decline in recent years that some NI EV drivers are actively moving back to petrol and diesel vehicles rather than face the ongoing stress of trying to find a working charger. Our recent survey showed 58% have considered returning to fossil fuel, directly due to the problems with the charging network here.

We have just 17 of the important 'Rapid' chargers to cover all of Northern Ireland. Latest figures show this equates to just 1.1 rapid chargers per 100K population. This compares to 10 per 100K population in Scotland. It is actually much worse than that as around 50% of these chargers are currently broken, so the comparison to Scotland is more like 20 to 1.

The network was installed between 2011 and 2015 and is now owned and operated by ESB. At the time it was one of the best in Europe, however things are very different now and by any metric Northern Ireland is lagging so far behind the rest of the UK and Ireland that it is in danger of becoming an EV no-go area for citizens, tourists and businesses alike.

The decade old equipment has reached the end of its useful life. ESB is not willing to turn on 'Pay to Charge' until new reliable, replacement equipment is installed and they say they need matched funding to do this. This decision in turn is creating issues with people hogging the ongoing free service as they are not able to be fined for overstays for example. The poor charging experience is also preventing more drivers from moving to an EV. We are locked in a vicious circle.

Additionally, independent operators are discouraged from entering the market here because of the perception of being unable to compete against the free ESB network. There are also issues around the cost of new connections here, partly due to the narrow remit of our Utility Regulator.

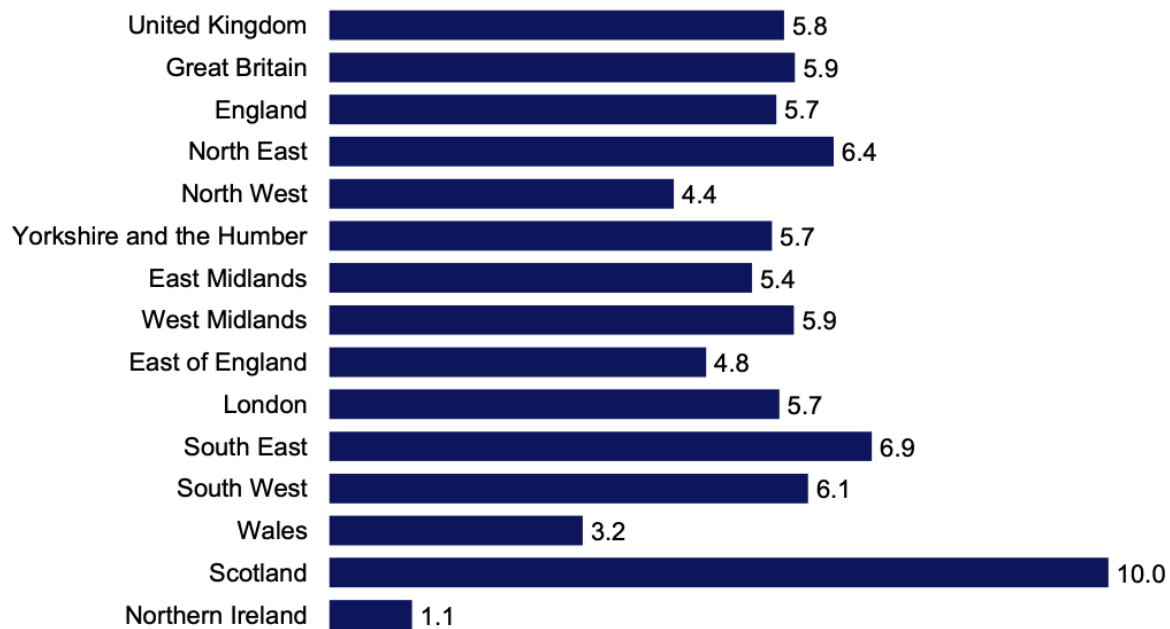
Moving Forward

This year we published our [6 Step Plan](#) to get Northern Ireland back on track. These actions include obtaining matched funding for ESB to upgrade the network here, accelerating the roll out of the Interreg Faster Project, removing barriers to our DNO/DSO, changing the Utility Regulators remit to include decarbonisation, helping local councils apply for the ORCS grant and finally, ensuring policy, plans and funding are in place for future growth.

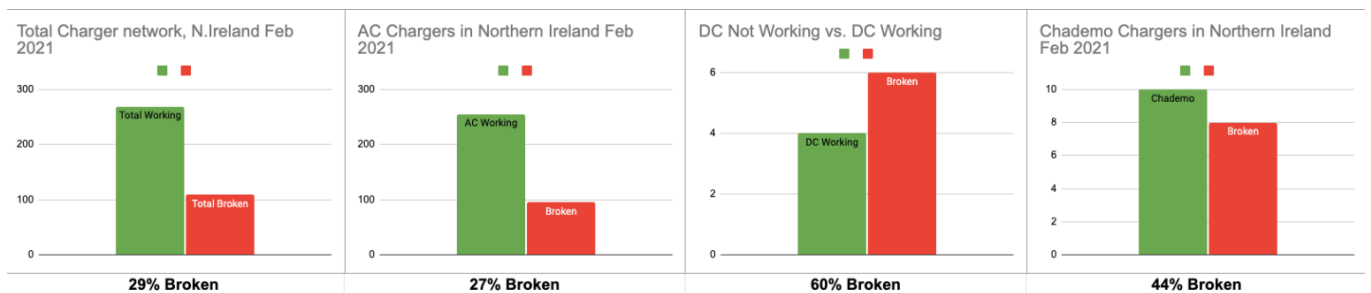
¹ <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/system/files/publications/infrastructure/tsni-headline-report-2017-2019.pdf>

The latest Department for Transport figures show Northern Ireland lags far behind all other regions for rapid charging

Chart 4 Public rapid charging devices per 100,000 of population by UK country and region
[\(table ECVD_01b\)](#)



This snapshot of the ESB charging network taken by EVANI in February 2021 shows more than a quarter of AC chargers and around half of DC (Rapid) chargers here are broken.



AC Available, AC Working, Rapid Available, Rapid Working, Chademo Available...

