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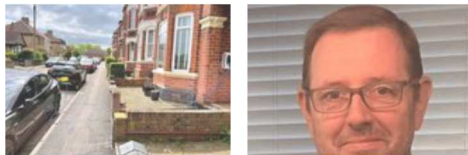
EV owners without a driveway breaking the law if they run cable over pavement

Industry body warns local people with limited access about public liability risk of charging their car at home — even though it's far cheaper than using public facility



An EV owner in Britain charges a car by running a cable across a pathway outside their house

Mark McCall



Amy Cochrane

Today at 07:25



Electric vehicle owners who don't have a driveway have been told they would be breaking the law if they laid a charging cable across the pavement without a licence.

Currently, 60% of households in Belfast don't have a driveway, and there has been a delay in changing the law to allow impacted EV owners to charge at home without permission from the Department for Infrastructure, or a street works licence.

Electric Vehicle Association Northern Ireland chairman Mark McCall said it made economic sense to charge at home for just 15p per kilowatt hour, meaning an annual cost of £400 for 10,000 miles.

Public chargers currently cost 49p per kilowatt hour (£1,320 a year for 10,000 miles).

"That is more than three times as expensive," Mr McCall pointed out.

"There are of course benefits to public chargers, which provide much-needed top-ups for those out and about.

"There are a number of solutions to get around this law that prevents people being able to charge at home, but for some reason DfI is refusing to sign off on them.

"Government bodies are more risk-averse than others, and numerous consultations and research goes into every decision. But there are so many benefits — we just don't know what the delay is.

"There's always 100 reasons not to do something, but these solutions have been tried and tested in different parts of the UK and they are working

"We don't know why they haven't been introduced here."



Mark McCall

Solutions include Gul-e and Kerbocharge.

Gul-e is a steel slotted channel for the cable to run along and has a brush cover.

Kerbocharge is a 32mm deep polymer channel with a snap closing lid.

The latter is ideal for uneven pavements and would work well in most areas, he added.

“They are quite neat, so we don’t know how anyone could object to installing them,” he said.

As it stands, local EV drivers would need DfI’s consent, or to obtain a street work licence — which can usually only be procured by utility companies.

“It’s an onerous process and requirements include holding £10 million public liability insurance cover, maintaining records of the works, and paying around £400 in fees, just to name a few,” Mr McCall explained.

“All these hurdles mean this will be prohibitive for homeowners who simply want to run a cable from their house to a car on the street.

“In England the law is slightly different; the roads are governed by different council authorities in different regions, but we have one body, DfI, so you’d think it would be easier for them to sign off on it.

“While there would still need to be involvement from the 11 councils around planning permissions, why not cover these solutions under permitted development rights in the future?”

Aside from it being cost-effective to charge at home, he pointed out a recent survey by the organisation revealed half of customers waiting in the queue for an EV will not move to fully electric until they can charge at home, due to the convenience.

He added: “While not every homeowner can guarantee to get parked outside their own home every night, most of our members only charge a few times per week.

“Just 18% of them said they charged every night in our survey, most might be twice a week, or just a few times a month.

“So, if these trials were to go ahead then those who do not own a driveway would not be put off purchasing an EV.”

Northern Ireland has seen the UK’s biggest percentage growth in hybrid electric car ownership since 2020.

There were 14,000 hybrid vehicles on the roads here in the final quarter of 2022, a jump of 133% in two years. But we lag behind the rest of the UK when it comes to ownership of fully electric cars.

DfI said: “The department would not be able to consent to lay a cable across the surface of a public pavement under the Roads (NI) Order.

“Laying a cable across a public footway poses a risk to public safety. Laying a cable on the pavement would be a risk and liability to the owner of the cable.

“We are working with councils to consider ways in which the needs of EV owners without driveway access can be met.”

Read more

- [Northern Ireland sales of full electric cars ‘up nearly 50%’ \(/life/motoring/northern-ireland-sales-of-full-electric-cars-up-nearly-50/a1340164833.html\)](#)

