

The ecar Project – an article by the Department of Regional Development

The £2.4M ecar Project is bringing electric vehicle charging infrastructure to Northern Ireland and promotes uptake of electric vehicles. The Project brings together a range of organisations, including local councils, power distributors and suppliers and the motor industry, and is jointly led by the Department for Regional Development and the Department of the Environment.

With transport being responsible for 25% of carbon emissions, and challenging targets to reduce these levels by 35% by 2025 and to generate 40% of energy from renewable sources by 2020, now is the time for everyone, including Government, to act.

Typically, electric vehicles have a range of around 100 miles on a full battery charge. As part of the effort to decarbonise transport, the ecar Project has already installed 100 standard charge posts (each with two charge points) across Northern Ireland, with a further 120 to come into operation in the next few weeks. The standard charge posts being installed will charge electric vehicles in between 1 and 6 hours. They are being placed in car parks and in town centre locations so that electric vehicle owners can top up their cars as they go about their normal business.

Nine rapid chargers have also been placed on strategic routes throughout Northern Ireland, with a further five to come very shortly. These will help people to make longer journeys, with compatible vehicles charging to 80% battery capacity in around 20 minutes.

To view the locations of all the current public charge points, please visit our website: www.ecarni.com where a mobile app is also available. The charging infrastructure in Northern Ireland can be accessed by a simple swipecard, which the ecar Project issues to anyone registering their electric vehicle through the website. The electricity at the public charge points is free for electric vehicle drivers at present.

When complete, in the next few weeks, this comprehensive charging network will make Northern Ireland a global leader in terms of electric vehicles.

180 grants of up to £1500 are currently available for people to install a home or workplace charge point, and, depending on the type of electric vehicle, it can take 3 to 6 hours to charge.

Electric vehicles are safe, reliable, have an automatic gearbox, with impressive acceleration, zero road tax and 80% lower running costs than their petrol or diesel counterparts. With up to £5000 off the purchase price of electric cars and up to £8000 off the price of electric vans, as well as significant tax incentives for business users, it has been shown that electric vehicles make sense. The motor industry has indicated that around 30 different models of electric vehicles will be available in the UK by the end of 2013, so now really is the time to consider making the shift and going electric!

Oh yeah, and they're fun to drive as well!

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