

Sustainable Development: 'E Car' Project

Fermanagh & Omagh District Council has been rewarded at the annual Sustainable Ireland Awards for introducing a fleet of 'green' vans, the first council in Northern Ireland to adopt such a strategy.

The council participated in the 'E-car' project, as part of a UK wide *Plugged In Places* scheme funded by the Office for Low Emission Vehicles; it provided government funding for the installation of vehicle charging points. Northern Ireland was one of eight regions to share the £30 million funding to pilot new charging infrastructure projects and to spearhead the roll-out of vehicles.

The council committed £60,000 to the project, contributing to the cost of procuring three electric vehicles, plus an additional £5000 per annum for two years to build the charging infrastructure throughout Fermanagh. A further three vans were purchased in 2014 to further improve the council's provision of sustainable transport.

The initial vehicles purchased were three Renault Kangoo ML20 44kW vans, the first production all-electric van. With no vehicle emissions, there are substantial environmental benefits. A diesel version of the same vans emits 119g CO₂/km¹.

The average annual mileage on the vans is 9600km/year. This equates to a 1.14 tonnes of CO₂/year no longer being emitted into the atmosphere for every van. In total this equates to an impressive 22.84 tonnes of CO₂ saved from the atmosphere – in just four years.

Aside from improved environmental efficiency, the electric vans are much more economical to run and maintain, cutting costs. According to the British Vehicle Rental Association, depending on when and how an electric vehicle is charged, on average it will cost 2 – 3p per mile. This is compared to 10-14p fuel costs per mile for an equivalent petrol or diesel vehicle. Therefore on average the fuel costs based on annual mileage of 10,000 would be fossil fuels: £1,200 (12p per mile) - vs - electric £300 (3p/mile).

In order to secure senior management buy-in and indeed, further investment from Council, running costs for an electric van and a similar diesel model were compared – the fuel cost savings, based on 6,000 miles per year amounted to £15,890 for the six vans, over five years.

Taking into consideration the initial costs – the electric vans are more expensive – and the overall comparative maintenance costs, the electric vans still turn out to provide a saving of £2596.75, per van, over five years i.e. £15,580.50 for the council's fleet of six vehicles.

¹ Source: Renault

The operation of these vehicles contributes to the delivery of the council's statutory duty of sustainable development and to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, both examples of best practice.

Car dependency and transport emissions are higher in Northern Ireland than any other region of the UK, due to the dispersed nature of the population and current low level of public transport provision. E-vehicles are an emerging but fast moving innovation in NI.

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council is a leader within sustainable transport by being the first local council in Northern Ireland to have a fleet of electric vehicles. The council has shared its experience of operating the vans with a wide range of pertinent audiences, including other councils, the Northern Ireland Sustainable Development Forum and the former Department for Regional Development.

Purchasing a fleet of e-vehicles and trying to encourage local people to invest in electric vehicles is futile unless the supporting infrastructure is in place. There are now 17 charging stations in the Fermanagh and Omagh area, part of the 334 throughout Northern Ireland. The provision of these charge points offers assurance to users of e-vehicles that the infrastructure is in place to get them to their desired destination.

In Fermanagh and Omagh District Council, sustainable development is considered to be a high priority, cutting across all the themes of service delivery. Council will continue to develop and implement its Sustainable Development Strategy and Action Plan.



Figure 1 - Charging point in use at technical services depot, Enniskillen



Figure 2 - E van charging onsite, Enniskillen



Figure 3 - Fermanagh E-Van



Figure 4 - E-Car charge point