

Green TEA Survey: Community Charging Points for Electric Vehicles in Eynsham

Angie Titchen & Amanda Stibrany (GreenTEA members)



When West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) declared it was **not** planning to install public electric vehicle charging points in Eynsham (because those in the proposed Park & Ride would be sufficient for our community), GreenTEA was concerned. Given our commitment to helping Eynsham Area respond to Climate Change, we carried out, in July, a small, pilot survey¹ of local people to get a beginning sense of the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on car use and commuting behaviour and any intended changes of behaviour. We envisaged that the findings might help us to challenge WODC, particularly in the light of their recent publication on the [Climate Action for West Oxfordshire](#)². This intention is even more topical, given the Government's very recent announcement that combustion engines will be withdrawn by 2030, so all new cars after 2030 will be electric or electric hybrid (till 2035). This decision reinforces the need for Local Councils to take action on EV charging and parking issues NOW.

We share our findings based on the views of 40 Eynsham residents who responded to our invitation set out in two News items in Eynsham Online in May and June 2020 and emails to subscribing members of GreenTEA and the Eynsham Planning Improvement Campaign. The purpose of publishing the findings gathered from what turned out to be, a small and unrepresentative sample, is to raise awareness of the issues, rather than offer a cross-section of opinion.

First Coronavirus lock down and beyond

Overall, the experience of the lockdown for respondents was that 'less' led to more, but with some negative consequences. **Less** traffic through the village led to **more** walkers and cyclists both in the village and surrounding countryside, **more** friendliness, spaciousness, awareness of wildlife, enjoyment, safety, peace and quiet and healthy air. However, on the negative side, respondents noticed empty buses, dangerous cycling and children on out-of-control scooters.

When questioned about whether they would like to continue (after lockdown) with changes in their behaviour they were forced to make due to the pandemic, comments from 38 residents lit up how **less** could lead to **more** as follows. **Community interdependence** could be fostered through more care and concern for neighbours, family, friends and nature. **People make lifestyle changes** by: questioning the necessity for, or alternatives to, our travel; buying less; more home and internet-working; making more use of local shops and amenities and; creating more sustainable, connective and healthy mobility. **Mobility could**

¹ <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/H62N8LM>

² <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/environment/climate-action/climate-action-and-what-we-are-doing/>

be achieved by increasing our walking and cycling generally, in the village and surrounding countryside. For safety reasons, cycle and pedestrian zones could be created by **restricting vehicular access in some village roads** and re-routing the S1 bus. Cyclists who put others' safety at risk in these zones could be offered **education**.



Less driving, being greener rocks! – 39 residents appreciate their local shops and services and want to continue using them. They see a **strong link between reducing car travel and shopping locally by bike or on foot**. They made suggestions for local retailers for attracting more local people. Local shopping has also played a part in the increase in our community's friendliness, awareness of others and helpfulness to those in need. Moreover, some

residents are shopping more prudently, making bread and growing and swapping their own vegetables, as well as expressing a **desire to move to greener personal modes of transport** and sharing.

Commuting to work modes before and expectations after lockdown

In the survey, we asked residents about the number of days they worked away from home, in an average week, before the COVID-19 crisis and how many days they expected to work away from home in an average week after the crisis is over. As only 23 out of 40 residents responded to this section, we surmise that only just over half of respondents are employed or of working age. We consider that this set of results are inconclusive so we are not reporting them here. If, in the future, we think it would be helpful to have further information we will put out a call on Eynsham Online News.

Before the lockdown, only 9 out of 23 respondents who commuted to work travelled by car before lockdown. Of the 15 out of 23 respondents who did not travel by car before lockdown – 7 travelled by public transport, 7 used a pedal bike and 1 person walked to work. None had a car share, used car hire, belonged to a car club or had an electric cycle.

Some do and some don't expect to change their commuting behaviour after lockdown.

Those who do, potential change included working from home one day per week, whilst those who don't, it is because they cannot work from home. Other possibilities for change included car travel distance reducing, for example, 'if parking charges at the Seacourt Park & Ride are dropped ... I will park there and cycle into my office at Osney Mead'. Some reported they only travel from time to time and may not be able to travel to their destinations by public transport. Others who already cycle to work don't see the mode of travel changing, whilst others travel to work will remain the same once the job returns to normal.

Electric Vehicles – ownership and charging

Only two of 39 respondents already have an electric car or hybrid and none have an electric van or truck. The majority of respondents (22) would like their next vehicle to be

electric. Some respondents express interest in sharing an electric car (6) or bicycle (5), whilst one was not interested in sharing either. One respondent is actively investigating car share options. A further nine who don't have an EV have no plans to get one. Reservations included not being able to afford the high cost of an electric car; only having access to on-street parking; being unsure how it could work or; in relation to an electric bicycle, needing to check that the weight of the bike was manageable.



Regarding **charging an EV**, the majority said they would charge it at home, both on and off the road. Off road included in their garage or driveway. One person already has a charge point on the driveway and another planned to install a driveway charger to their solar panels. Others have yet to look into the possibilities for charging at home, whilst those who have, stated a need for local charging points as they either have nowhere at home or it is unlikely that they will be able to install one at home. A few people are unsure or have no idea how an EV is charged.

When asked if there are, or would be, **problems with charging**, there were 21 responses. Six people report that there were no problems or they had overcome them. Others point out a current lack of charging points, restricted places to park due to 'excessive number of vehicles parked in the street' and lack of cabling. In addition, if there was a major adoption of EV charging, local grid capacity could also become problematic. Car tampering was also mentioned if charging points were located 'out of the way'. Three are unsure or have no idea if there would be problems.

In relation to **overcoming problems**, 31 people suggest installation of (preferably fast) chargers at different places around the village, for example, kerbside charging points, community charge stations within 10 minute walk from home, installation of new power connection to home garages and more information about charging locations. One respondent states that installation 'would require far greater investment' than hitherto. Other suggestions include, 'fewer cars or a community hub of affordable green energy', 'domestic batteries and an integrated car-domestic system' and a locally distributed grid with major PV generation'.

A significant number of EV charging points across Eynsham are **recommended** 'if we are to go ahead with massive uptake of electric vehicles'. Eynsham public car park (14 respondents), the Park & Ride across the A40 (1 respondent) and the playing field car park (1 respondent) are seen as obvious places. However, the Park & Ride, seen as a 'white elephant' and 'very unlikely to help solve the traffic issues on the A40', is considered 'not handy for current Eynsham (drive and walk back over very busy road)'. Rather charging points there would serve the Garden Village and park and riders.

There is also a strong view that **charging points should be provided in many places** around Eynsham, 'close to where people live', not only to serve residents who have mobility issues, but also to reduce 'casual vandalism' through 'closer supervision of vehicles'. It is suggested that charging points, for example, in lampposts, could be incorporated into existing

residential areas and new housing developments. Regarding the latter, comprehensive charging points should be integrated into the West Eynsham Strategic Development Plan and the Garden Village Area Action Plan. Finally, a forward-looking suggestion is that 'It would be great if one of the petrol stations could work with the community to create a covered, solar powered charge hub as there would be a shop to visit whilst charging.' It is considered that a similar development in the public carpark would also work alongside a map to the village shops.

Conclusions

It is heartening to see the positives that people have reported in the midst of the first Coronavirus lockdown. Particularly, they recognise that less traffic in Eynsham and its surrounding countryside enhanced our community spirit, health and well-being. They identify a strong link between reducing car travel and shopping locally by bike or on foot. Moreover, suggestions are made about: fostering community interdependence; making lifestyle changes and; increasing safety for cyclists and pedestrians by restricting vehicular access on some village roads. Some people expect to make changes to their commuting to work behaviour after lock down, primarily, by working from home one day a week. Those who do not expect change said: they already cycled to work; could not work from home or; other modes of transport were not available.

Regarding EVs, on the very day (14/11/20) that the UK Government announced that all new cars after 2030 will be electric or electric hybrid (till 2035), we can report that, at a time when even more charging points will be required, the people of Eynsham recognise that there are limited opportunities in our village for charging an EV due to many homes having no driveways and excessive parking on streets. Putting those obstacles alongside WODC's low provision of convenient, community charging points, the results of this survey could be used by our community to build a campaign for the inclusion of community charging points in old Eynsham, as well as in WODC's West Eynsham Strategic Development Plan and the Garden Village Area Action Plan. WODC would do well to listen to residents' recommendation that, although charging points could be suitably provided in Eynsham Public and Sports Field Car Parks, provision at the Park & Ride site was considered unsuitable due to distance and having to cross the A40. Moreover, community charging points should be provided in numerous places in the village near to where people live, shop and work. And they are needed NOW!

Acknowledgements

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