
MID WALES LOW CARBON TRANSPORT PROJECT – AUGUST 2020

An update to partners and participants on the progress of the project, and opportunities for involvement.

ABOUT OPEN NEWTOWN

Going Green for a Living Community Land Trust (trading as Open Newtown) is a development trust and a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee (company number 10976887). Open Newtown exists to promote the green and blue assets of the region and to develop opportunities for people and for enterprises based on our rich natural resources. Owned by its community, Open Newtown manages 130 acres of green spaces within Newtown but is also actively involved in developing sports and activities, building a new Riverside Venue, engaging people in wellbeing experiences and in developing low carbon solutions in the fields of transport and energy. It does all of this through partnerships and in consultation with its community.



INTRODUCING: A NEW SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT ENTERPRISE

Open Newtown is delivering the project during 2020 and 2021, installing public Electric Vehicle Charge Points (EVCPs) and establishing EVs within car clubs in our towns. As part of the project a new legal entity – along the lines of a Low Carbon Transport Cooperative – will be established. This locally owned not-for-private gain company will take on the assets and operations of the car clubs and hold the ambitions to sustain and grow the level of low carbon affordable transport across Mid Wales.

BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

During 2018 and 2019 there were several initiatives intended to help bring low carbon electric transport to Mid Wales. Our AM Russel George held meetings and undertook reports within the Welsh Government. The WG themselves set out a fund for installing the ‘rapid’ (20 min) chargers across Wales so that commuters through Mid Wales can do so on electric. This is still underway. Powys County Council implemented a similar fund but for ‘fast’ (2-4 hours) chargers that will encourage people to stop-a-while. These Destination Chargers are operating in PCC-owned car park in most of our towns.

Open Newtown – in development with Renew Wales and local communities - received Arwain funding during 2019 to build on this by:

1. Establishing further public charging sites. Complementing both PCC’s and WG’s EVCPs, influencing choices of installation sites and consulting with a wide variety of stakeholders to identify needs and opportunities at the town level.
2. Direct support to get electric vehicles into car clubs, to help them operate additional EVs if they are already doing so, and to get new car clubs set up in a series of towns across Mid Wales where none exist.
3. Utilising these chargers and EVs to make a difference to transport poverty in Powys – especially as extra resource for community transport, and in connecting to public transport and addressing ‘gaps’. Covid-19 has added significant pressure to these services.

INSTALLING CHARGE POINTS

We are installing fast chargers, those that take 2-4 hours to give an EV a full recharge. We are doing this because they are affordable; within our budget and local electricity grid capacity. Fast chargers meet the identified community needs of:

- EVCPs that sit within each town's car club. This is about locating charge points (and cars) close to where people need them.
- Providing destination chargers that enhance our town's appeal to visitors and contribute an income to the car clubs.

We are also identifying and supporting the co-location of quicker (and more costly) rapid chargers in partnership with the new Wales-wide EVCP cooperative called TrydaNi. www.chargeplacewales.org

In each town we have worked in we have followed a selection process made up of:

- Scoping across whole town leading to a long list of prospective sites.
 - Assessment and dialogue with prospective hosts to help produce a short list.
 - Proposals sent to all short-listed hosts.
 - Options taken out on favoured site(s) to allow for technical development.
 - Chosen sites taken under lease and installation begins.

GEOGRAPHICAL SPREAD

The towns we are focussing on include:

- ✓ Machynlleth – where proposals are with several short-listed host locations.
- ✓ Newtown – where proposals have begun to go out, but more are to follow.
- ✓ Welshpool – where short-listing is underway.

Llanidloes, originally within the project, already has a long-established car club and have recently taken on an EV; they remain a supportive observer of this project and may want to partner in future. Other locations being considered include Montgomery and the string of settlements around Carno. We have also been approached for advice by Llanfyllin and welcome any development opportunities there.

In undertaking the project we have been drawing on experiences from as far afield as Moray, Exeter and the Netherlands. As we have developed the project we have been joined by observers from Gwynedd and south Powys, eager to learn from the progress we are making and develop their own schemes to meet community need.

SETTING UP CAR CLUBS

We are beginning with 1- 2 cars in each town, based around using affordable and accessible EVs powered, where possible, by local renewable energy. The cars are 'shared' amongst local people allowing:

- ✓ Access to cars for those without a car in their household.
- ✓ Allowing two car households to drop to one car, with the commensurate savings in money.
- ✓ An opportunity to switch to and get familiar with EVs.

These benefits are now even more crucial in a Covid-impacted economy where travel to work via car is encouraged and where incomes are being put under pressure.

Consultations in each town (prior to Covid) have been recruiting ideas and prospective 'members' but more promotion is needed as members form the backbone of a successful car club. We have also been identifying and talking to potential 'anchor tenants' i.e. businesses and public sector bodies based in each town and who may like to use EVs during the working day.

The cars we are aiming for will be nearly new mid-sized electric cars that give us good range and driving confidence and serve most needs. We are planning to lease the cars, using a financing partnership with a local community bank.

MAKING MID WALES A 'GO TO' PLACE FOR EV DRIVERS

The ambition is to install EV chargers **and** set up car club operations in each of the towns across Mid-Wales; across the Cambrian Line route. The impact of this is intended to be:

- ✓ Opening up Mid Wales to EV use by having a reliable network of charge points; opening this up to locals and to visitors, to individuals and businesses alike.
- ✓ Giving a wide range of people access to affordable transport. Affordable for people (through shared car use) and planet (through basing them on renewable power).
- ✓ Setting them up as one cooperative company to achieve economies of scale across Mid Wales, to share resources and learning and build the most resilient community business.

SUPPORTING COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT – A RESPONSE TO COVID-19

At the outset of the project we intended to run 'pilots' that linked our EV cars to community and public transport hubs. With the arrival of Covid-19 it may now be the case that access to affordable pooled cars becomes an integral part of how community and public transport systems operate.

Being Covid-compliant will involve cleaning regimes and providing appropriate equipment. Being part of the Covid response may mean us:

- ✓ Providing access to cars as people move away from public transport and / or locating cars at public transport interchanges.
- ✓ Linking the cars to the community transport schemes to support clean and green travel to health appointments

THE BUSINESS MODEL AND THE NEW COOPERATIVE COMPANY

There are several key elements being fed into the business plan including:

1. Recognising we have two distinct business arms – EV charging and car clubs – that need to work alongside each other but which also need to perform individually.
2. Cooperatively running the business across the Mid Wales towns giving all parties greater flexibility and resilience.

We have used the word cooperative on a couple of occasions and cooperating between business arms and between towns in Mid Wales makes a lot of commercial sense. In planning the new company that will take on the charge points and car clubs it is important that it delivers the required 'functions':

- Developing and advocating for 'affordable' transport (affordable for people and for planet).
- Operating commercially and cost effectively, giving good flexibility and building in resilience.
- The ability to grow into the market, to expand services and / or expand geography where appropriate.
- Raising finance to support growth, through grants and local share offers.

WAYS TO GET INVOLVED — TO ENSURE COMMUNITY BEST FIT

INVITING FOUNDING DIRECTORS

As we develop the EV charge points and put EV cars in to car clubs in each town we will also be setting up the locally owned not-for-private gain enterprise to take these on and further develop the opportunities for low carbon travel in Mid Wales.

Founding Directors will come in part from stakeholders involved in this project, but we are keen to hear from others who can:

- ✓ Offer skills, mentoring and experience that help the company establish and then grow
- ✓ Give their local town/ area a voice in a Mid Wales ambition
- ✓ Ensure coalition working across the region in recovery responses to CV-19 and the Climate Emergency

ATTRACTING EVCP HOST SITES

Would you like to suggest a local business or community hub that you think has enough space to host a minimum of 2 chargers and a space to pick up & drop off a club car? Please be in touch to tell us. Increased footfall and sales, and positive publicity for the host are benefits.

CO-PRODUCING NEW SERVICES

We know from our work in the community that social prescribing, care visits, delivering prescriptions or shopping, moving items such as PPE or Meals on Wheels may benefit from electric travel. It is cheaper than running petrol or diesel vehicles and does not cause air pollution. Now there is delivery mechanism to co-produce services using low carbon transport, in Powys.

BRANDING

Do you have a wonderful idea for the name of our shared EV scheme? Is it a Welsh word? A phrase associated with our place in Cambrian Mountains? An idea about preserving our environment but getting from A to B while we do this?

Please be in touch with us to discuss ideas – we look forward to working with you!

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