

COUNTY COUNCIL

21 FEBRUARY 2018

QUESTIONS FROM AREA ACTION PARTNERSHIPS

Chester-le Street AAP

The Chester-le-Street & District AAP is currently undertaking a Green Energy Study to support a number of local energy efficiency improvements for residents and businesses.

“It has recently been in the news that the Governments ‘On Street Residential Charge Point Scheme’ has been undersubscribed by local authorities across the County. The £4.5m fund pays 75% of the cost of on street electric car charge points to benefit residences that do not have drive ways or garages and as such cannot install a private EV charge point. Chester-le-Street Town has a very high proportion of terraced houses, which do not have garages and have only on street parking.

Could Durham County Council investigate the feasibility of taking advantage of the scheme and using Chester-le-Street as a pilot to assess the schemes viability for the county whilst also improving Electric Vehicle infrastructure for local residents?

Response

I would like to thank the AAP for their question.

We fully support the move toward cleaner vehicle technology, and generally welcome any government funding that helps to encourage the take up of electric vehicles. They are both better for the environment and good for the region's economy.

The county council were early adopters of electric charging infrastructure and already have 39 charging points available across the county, with a further 12 planned to be delivered over the coming months. We are also working with colleagues in NECA to further develop the offer for electric vehicle owners, including the role out of rapid chargers and using government funding to pilot the country's first Electric Vehicle Filling Stations to be located in Newcastle and Sunderland. This work will help to keep County Durham and the wider NECA area at the forefront of electric vehicle technology, with the North East being one of the best served regions in the country.

However, the government's current grant scheme, aimed at properties that don't have drives or garages is proving to be more problematic .

Unfortunately, our terraced streets were not designed for the level of car ownership that now exists; and this often leads to parking pressures. In these circumstances, residents without electric vehicles see EV bays as taking up valuable space.

Conversely, for those who do own an electric vehicle, then the bay effectively become your own private parking space, which may not go down well with the neighbours.

I suspect that these difficulties are a substantial part of the reason for the low take up of the government grant funding.

Notwithstanding any of this, the County Council remains committed to supporting the transition towards electric vehicles; and we are happy to work with the AAP to identify suitable alternative locations, such as car parks and other public spaces where we can install additional charging points.

East Durham Rural Corridor AAP:

Over the last few months members of the public have reported that they have experienced temporary closure of GP surgeries, reportedly as a result of staff shortages. Could the council please explain whether this has been experienced in other areas, and if the council is aware what steps are being taken by the CCG to address the situation?

Response

We have a number of practices who have reported difficulties in relation to staffing GP practices. In particular there is both a national and local shortage of GP's who are prepared to take a permanent, salaried or partner roles in General Practice. Of those GPs coming into General practice the numbers prepared to work full time is dropping due to workload pressures. Two practices in Durham Dales Easington Sedgefield have approached the CCG regarding possible branch closures due to workforce challenges predominantly but also due to other issues relating to premises and providing safe services. In North Durham there are similar issues in relation to staffing branch practices and in some cases finding alternative providers who want to sustain these contracts. Again this is due to the recruitment issues in primary care.

The CCG's are working closely with practices via the Primary Care Strategy to support the sustainability of practices. This work includes addressing skill mix and the GP career start scheme.

Further details of this work can be provided on request to AAP's.