



The West Yorkshire Combined Authority

A unique scheme to help improve air quality within West Yorkshire through the provision of green electric vehicle charging facilities for the public.

Background

After securing funding from the Government's Office for Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV), the West Yorkshire Combined Authority appointed EQUANS to deliver 88 new charge points across West Yorkshire, all using 100% renewable energy. EQUANS provided free charging at all charging points for the first two years as a further incentive for residents and business users. The scheme has seen huge successes, with over nine million free miles provided to drivers since the launch in 2019.

Requirement

In 2018, the West Yorkshire Combined Authority and its district partners decided to take a key step in improving air quality across the combined region and pledged to make West Yorkshire a net-zero carbon economy by 2038.

To protect the health of residents, they needed a solution that could improve air quality, while at the same time developing transport networks that are vital to supporting inclusive growth. Moreover, the solution needed to include the provision of green energy and needed to support residents in the switch to greener transport.

The solution

After securing almost £2 million from OLEV for the project and with £1.2 million in matched funding from the West Yorkshire Combined Authority and its district partners, the West Yorkshire Combined Authority awarded EQUANS the contract to install and operate 88 new charging points across West Yorkshire.

This network would be the largest rapid electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure in West Yorkshire, providing 100% renewable electricity supplied by EQUANS, using EQUANS' own GeniePoint Platform EV charging technology.



Research and planning

Before the launch of the project, the West Yorkshire Combined Authority carried out research to forecast the success of the programme. Through data insight, they were able to predict that circa 500 diesel taxis and private hire cars could be converted to hybrid and pure electric vehicles as a result of the chargepoint roll-out, which would have a significant, positive impact on transport pollution levels.

These forecasts supported the West Yorkshire Combined Authority in securing almost £2 million in funding from the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles.

EQUANS and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority also spent time looking at successful schemes in other regions. London had recently rolled out a successful network, so this formed as inspiration, along with lessons learnt from their project. These learnings were then implemented into the design of the West Yorkshire network.

The West Yorkshire Combined Authority were keen to ensure that the network design was influenced by the public and those who would be using the charge points. To gather these insights, EQUANS held a series of focus groups with taxi drivers across the region to understand their needs and concerns. These focus groups uncovered several learnings that influenced the design of the project, such as the need for rapid charging facilities in key taxi pick-up locations.



Site selection and roll-out programme

To ensure the 88 charging points have maximum impact, EQUANS selected prime locations where footfall was high and power was accessible. For every charging point installed, EQUANS delivered two bays – one which is specifically for taxis and private hire vehicles and the second for all other users. EQUANS were responsible for identifying and securing installation locations and corresponding lease agreements, whilst project managing the end-to-end design, approvals and installation process.

EQUANS supplied high quality hardware, along with a full back-office and Operation & Maintenance (O&M) support, known as the GeniePoint platform. The breadth of experience offered by EQUANS ensured the successful delivery of EVCPs in adherence to OLEV funding requirements. EQUANS worked to achieve a fast delivery of charging points and despite unavoidable delays due to the pandemic, EQUANS had successfully installed 64 chargers across West Yorkshire by Q4 2020.



In 2021, EQUANS and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority established a new partnership with Asda, to install charging points at 19 Asda stores within West Yorkshire. The provision of rapid electric vehicle charging facilities at Asda stores supported the West Yorkshire Combined Authority's objectives, as well as supporting Asda customers, by providing a reliable and convenient way to charge whilst they visit the store.

Challenges

The size of the project meant that EQUANS and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority needed to work efficiently through every stage of the process and engage stakeholders early. Each site required involvement from a number of parties; including legal, energy supply, OZEV and landowners (where the land was not owned by the council). EQUANS assigned a dedicated project manager to manage engagement with key stakeholders throughout the duration of the project.

EQUANS ensured that the site development plan was refined and agreed early so that any potential issues with the site, such as power supply limitations, were uncovered at the start. This then ensured enough time could be spent on working with external parties to find a solution or select a more suitable location for the chargepoint.



Driving network utilisation

Another key challenge for both EQUANS and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority was ensuring West Yorkshire residents and taxi drivers were aware of the scheme. EQUANS utilised the insights gained from the focus groups to develop an optimised marketing and communication plan to promote the EVCPs.

Following these findings, EQUANS utilised its established media channels to secure a segment on BBC Look North. BBC Look North has 800,000+ viewers daily so offered an excellent platform to promote the project to a wide stakeholder base. Crucially, the messaging within the segment highlighted a number of key benefits that the scheme was bringing to the taxi/PHV sector.

EQUANS also promoted the project through a number of other channels such as: press coverage; paid social media posts; dedicated website; promotion on council websites; EVCP mapping intermediaries (Zap Map, National Chargepoint Registry (NCR) etc.) and Pay Per Click campaigns.

The impact

EQUANS has successfully installed 87 charging points to date and is on track to deliver 100 charge points by October 2021, exceeding the original agreement.

The partnership has since achieved significant milestones:

- Over 2,164 tonnes of CO2 have been saved by drivers since the scheme launched.
- 2.7 million kilowatt hours of green energy has been dispensed – enough to power a typical EV around the planet 380 times.
- The charging points have since provided more than nine million free miles to over 10,000 registered drivers.

The network of chargers has also supported Leeds City Council with the launch of their EV Trials Programme. The programme helps organisations to understand the benefits of electric vehicles and make a business case for switching to greener transport options, through allowing local organisations to borrow an EV.

Recent data from the Department for Transport has suggested that since the scheme was introduced, the purchase of ultra-low emission vehicles in West Yorkshire has risen by 162%.

Cllr Manisha Kaushik, Deputy Chair of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority Transport Committee said:

“Around 500 diesel taxis and private hire cars are forecast to be converted to hybrid and pure electric vehicles as a result of us rolling out these charge points.”

The region also now boasts the most rapid EV chargers across any county (excluding London); suggesting the scheme has raised awareness of low emission vehicles and promoted purchase.

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