

Why is a universal payment app essential to mainstream adoption of electric vehicles?

By Mike Todd, CEO of Volkswagen Financial Services

As Ofgem approves a £300million investment in the UK's charging infrastructure, the electric vehicle revolution is continuing to gather pace.

But mainstream adoption of EVs can't just be down to more charging points. People have to find it easy to access them and with a range of suppliers across more than 40,000 UK charging points, universal payment is essential.

The money for these charge points, according to a recent report in The Guardian, will fund the installation of 1,800 new ultra-rapid car charge points for motorway service stations and a further 1,750 charge points in towns and cities.

However, even with thousands of charge points across the UK in 14,000 locations (according to Zap Map) our recent Sparking Debate Panel found that drivers, who were considering switching to an electric vehicle, had some concerns about the range and running costs, availability of charging points and support on home charging.

These issues are already being tackled by the industry, but with several providers asking that motorists sign up to their individual services to charge, this may create a phone full of payment apps – a scenario that seems to jar with the idea of making owning an EV simple and stress free.

A confusion of charges

The system is a little fragmented and there are various providers, which can sometimes make it difficult for individuals and business fleets to subscribe to every single one.

The providers also have different requirements; sometimes drivers can pay by card, other times they need to set up an account or have a special app.

This has created a confusion of charges, as it isn't always easy for drivers to navigate multiple apps, accounts and passwords.

For example, a petrol car driver may have a single fuel card that can be used at most filling stations, whereas an electric car driver could have ten or more different apps on their phone for different charging point providers.

If individuals can't rely on every charge point being accessible to them, this increases the potential for range anxiety in some drivers.

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While all rapid charge points installed since spring 2020 should provide debit or credit card payment, to encourage greater EV uptake we need to overcome small steps like this to make sure that bigger hurdles are easier to tackle.

Knitting together the network

There are many industry calls for a uniform payment method and system for charging points across the UK to knit together the network. Until that happens, we've been able to create a solution for our business partners in our own app called Charge&Fuel. This allows fleets to access and pay for EV charging points from many different providers through a single app.

We've teamed up with LogPay to enable drivers to pay at more than 3,000 charging points across the UK and Europe. The network that Charge&Fuel covers is still growing and will include fuel stations in the future.

The Charge&Fuel app had to prevent the need to open lots of different accounts. As a result we've seen it make life much easier for both fleet managers and drivers because they only need one account to access and pay for charging.

The purpose is to give one electronic monthly invoice for all transactions making tracking expenses and mileage claims a simpler process. When auditing season comes around, this can be hugely valuable.

Yet, and perhaps most importantly of all, it gives fleet drivers the confidence that they will be able to access charging points throughout the country – and many across Europe – without requiring a multitude of apps on their phones.

Find out more, here: <https://www.chargeandfuel.vwfs.com/>

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