

## Largest ev charging networks uk

Picking an EV or one of the best hybrid cars is one of the most significant thing you can do to save the planet these days. But all is not rosy in the electric car charging market. For householders with a private driveway, there's a need to pony up around ?1000 (possibly more) for home charging - and there are few grants available nowadays. For the rest of us, we're expected to rely on the public charging network.

Despite government pledges - in the form of bucket loads of cash - essential public electric vehicle (EV) charging stations are not being installed quickly enough. What's more, recent energy price rises have had a knock-on effect to the cost of charging too, bumping up the cost of keeping an EV on the road. In less than eight years, the government wants all motorists behind the wheel of an electric car. So how realistic is this?

Since not all public charge points are created equally, so we've put together this guide to help you avoid wasting your time, money and effort - and ultimately, making your electric car experience super frustrating.

The most common public EV charge point providers are BP Pulse (Chargemaster), Chargeplace Scotland, Chargeyourcar, Fastned, Geniepoint, Gridserve (Ecotricity), Instavolt, Ionity, Osprey/Engenie, Pod Point, Shell Recharge and Tesla. In this guide, we assess them all.

The charge point providers suck up the cost of installing the equipment, working with energy providers and local authorities. There have been grants from the UK government and EU to help accelerate the roll out of networks and in turn, encourage drivers to make the switch to electric.

In terms of electricity used at the charge point, who pays depends on the provider and the location. In the main, EV charge point providers have an app, enabling customers to input their debit or credit card details, to pay for their charge.

In 2019, the UK government advised all charging point providers to integrate contactless payment to improve accessibility of charge points and strengthen the UK's public charging infrastructure. However, computer chip shortages and supply chain issues have delayed some providers' roll out of those contactless pads.

Some charge points are provided free-of-charge, as a customer perk at some businesses (thank you, Tesco). If drivers have difficulties trying to initialise the charge, or connect the app to make payment, it's always worth calling the device provider - the contact details and device ID are on the charger. Sometimes providers can initiate a charge remotely, helping to get you on your way.

Having amalgamated the Polar Network and Chargemaster, the BP Pulse network is now one of the largest. Rapid BP Pulse points can be found on BP forecourts. With 8,000 points, from "fast" 7kW chargers to rapid 150kW chargers, there's a good selection. You connect to the device through its mobile app plus members get

discounts, including free-of-charge use at selected points. Pricing: Subscribers and members pay between 44p and 67p per kWh. Guests or Contactless users between 57p and 69p per kWh, depending on power delivery.

Our Verdict: The size of the BP Pulse network means you'll definitely come across its chargers at some point. On the whole, the experience is positive--the points accept contactless and some devices are opened to "free vend" if there's remote communication issues. There are too many "out of order" services though and that's frustrating since an account is ?7.99 per month and guest charging isn't cheap.

Chargeplace Scotland is run by the Scottish Government. Aiming to make EV charging accessible to all along the full length of the country, there's over 2,000 charge points. Access means downloading and registering on the app. Pricing: From free at selected points to 16p per kWh, with ?1 minimum charge.

Our Verdict: Finding Chargeplace Scotland is easy enough and in decent locations. The map on a desktop browser works very well, but there's reliance on the app, which isn't so decent, and there's no contactless access, so you're forced to deal with a frustrating app registration experience.

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