The Wild West – an introduction to electric vehicle charging
Written by Jules Procter. March 2026. http://www.banburyshire.net

Introduction
In my mind, there is no doubt that trying to charge an electric vehicle is still like being in the Wild West, little in the way of laws and rules for everyone, and lots of cowboys moving in.
However, this piece will, hopefully, help to you gain confidence in where and how you can charge. So you start to get an understanding of the benefits of driving an electric vehicle (EV).
I'm on my second EV, starting with a BMW i3Rex, and now have a Nissan eNV200 van. (As there was no public charging in Axminster, when I was looking to get an EV, I played safe and got the Rex.) I've travelled all over the UK in both vehicles, all year round, with growing confidence, but it is important to drive the car that meets yours needs. I still do route planning, when on road trips, but otherwise just use chargers while I'm travelling. The number of chargers is rapidly increasing, but you still have to get to know how to use them, which buttons to press, and in which order.

Tips :-
- Think about the places you mostly drive, and look to see what charging networks cover that route.
- Use **ZapMap (**https://www.zap-map.com/live/**)** , or similar, to see the information you need.
- This will minimize the number of apps/dongles you will have. Keep it simple.
- Use aggregators apps for more convenience, such as :-
  ZapMap (see above),
  Octopus Electroverse (https://electroverse.octopus.energy/map) or
  OVO (formerly Bonnet https://www.joinbonnet.com/coverage) .
- Keep a look out for offers on reducing your charging costs (they do come along from time to time, but don't rely on them).
- Spend time ahead of an unusual journey, downloading the apps you may need, getting the payment dongle (allow at least a week for delivery), looking at the best charging networks to use.
- Stop to charge before your vehicle gets below 20% (saves you getting anxious). Move on when over 80% (as the charging speed will slow down as the battery fills up.). On an overnight stop don't worry if the battery gets to 100%, but be aware the brake regen won't work until the level has dropped. (This varies from vehicle to vehicle.)
- Do other things while your vehicle is charging. You don't have to watch it, but be aware of any overstay/parking restrictions/fees when public charging. Go shopping, go to work, have a walk, meet friends. Be positive in how you use the time.
- On a road trip, have a drink or meal, snooze, read the news, watch a (short) film. Talk other EV drivers, in order to glean, or impart, useful information.

Apps and charging networks :-

Currently, and for the foreseeable future, there are a myriad of charging networks, and apps.
The instructions at the charger, if any, don't follow any set method or order, so you are just having to get to know each one, for the time being. All rapid chargers must include the ability to pay by a credit or debit card. Some fast chargers also allow this. Otherwise you will have to pay via an app or an RFID dongle/card.
Recommended charging networks (but check your area) :-
- Tesla – cheap rapid charging. There are two networks, you want the Public one, use Zapmap to differentiate.
- Be.EV – cheap rapid charging, and possibly cheaper fast charging (just bought out Mer in UK)
- Arnold Clark – cheap rapid charging. (Especially if driving in north England or Scotland)
- Podpoint - cheapish fast charging (you have to preload money into your account on the app)
- Whoever is local to your needs, for convenience and familiarity.

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There are different EV connectors, for different parts of the world, the image below show most of the ones in use, which you may hear about in articles.
(It does not include NACS, which is USA only.)



Most EV's in Europe will have either a Type 2 (Fast/AC) connection or a CCS (Rapid/DC) connection. Some South Korean and Japanese may have the Type1 and Chademo equivalents. These require suitable adapters to use Type 2 or CCS chargepoints.
There is a lot of energy flowing through the charging cables, so please make sure you have a suitably safe cable/connector/plug.

Fast charging :-
Type 2 charger - 7kWh AC
So if your car can do 3.5 miles per kWh, then an hour's charge will add 24.5 miles of range.

Rapid charging :-
From 50kWh upwards DC
All rapid charging can be paid by using a credit/debit card. This may include a pre-auth fee.
Again, so if your car can do 3.5 miles per kWh,
then an hour's charge will add 175 miles of range, with a 50kWh charger.
(Assuming the battery is large enough to take this amount of charge.)

Home charging :-
- As well as using your own charger, you may be able to use someone else's through a home-charge sharing system such as Co-charger (https://co-charger.com/) usually a 7kWh limit. Check prices, not everyone is your friend.
- "Granny" cable 3.5kWh limit. Have good quality socket, capable of providing high levels of power for a long time. Safety first, melting a plug is not a good look!
- Type 2 charger 7kWh limit (unless 3 phase supply available, then is 22kWh). Note: most EVs are limited by the speed of the onboard charger to 7kWh at most.

The electric vehicle charging network is growing at a rapid pace, and with the larger capacity of batteries in most modern EVS, travelling around the UK is getting easier and easier.
However, the charging networks still don't have a standardised way of use or payment, so please take time to get to know how to charge your vehicle. It still is the Wild West, but I think the white hats will win. Be patient, and enjoy your EV!