Appendix 2

Ashford Rural Electric Vehicle Charging Points (EVCP) Grants Scheme

Rural England Prosperity Fund - EVCP Policy to 31 March 2025

Ashford Borough Council – Policy

Background

Transitioning from petrol and diesel cars to electric vehicles (EVs) is key to reducing emissions and meeting Net Zero. Reflecting this, the UK Government has committed to end the sale of new petrol and diesel cars/vans from 2030. For this to happen, however, it is essential that there is a comprehensive and competitive EV charging network in place, one that people can trust and they are confident using – much like filling up with petrol or diesel. If this is not the case, and the charging network is perceived as inadequate, or as not offering a fair deal to people, that will be a major barrier to EV take-up. The Competition and Markets Authority noted targeted interventions are necessary to kick-start more investment and unlock competition in remote areas, where the commercial case for investment is very weak, which means there's a risk these will be left unserved.

At a local level, Low Carbon Kent has administered the Kent REVS scheme, whereby businesses can rent an EV for up to two months to demonstrate to organisations the benefits of owning and running an electric vehicle and to contribute to the aim of achieving net-zero emissions by 2050 across Kent. Ashford has the highest amount of businesses that have used the scheme in the county, with nearly a quarter of the overall businesses being from our borough. The scheme is due to end in January 2023 and anecdotal feedback so far from businesses that haven't gone on to adopt EV fleets includes the lack of EV charging infrastructure outside urban areas in Kent.

Grant funding has been available from the Office of Zero Emissions Vehicles (OZEV) to contribute to the installation of EV charge points both at residential properties and workplaces. However, especially in rural areas, there is a need for additional options for residents and businesses to incentivise the expansion of the EV charging infrastructure. Data of available EV charging infrastructure from Zap-map shows there are 9 EV charging points (excl. Zaphome). Zap-Map also shows that only 4 of the EVCPs being publicly accessible 24/7 with no physical restrictions, with only 1 of those being in the rural area of the borough. Furthermore 65% of Ashford borough residents commute by car, which considering the availability of other sustainable methods of transport in rural areas, underlines the importance of transitioning to EVs. County Councils Network (CCN) research explains that the slow roll out of charging networks, the travel distances involved, and the general attitude towards Ultra Low Emission Vehicles in rural areas mean that greater challenges exist in achieving the necessary transition to electric vehicles .

The opportunity is thus to provide EV charge points in publicly accessible spaces in rural areas of the borough to allow residents, businesses and visitors to charge EVs. This could include Parish Council car parks or Ashford Borough Council land where car parking is permitted.

Overview of the scheme

The Ashford EVCP Grant Scheme will provide grants up to £12,000 to support the installation of Electric Vehicle Charging Points at publicly accessible parking sites in rural areas of the borough.

The grant can be used in conjunction with other financial support schemes available, subject to those other schemes allowing this. Applicants that have either received a grant from this scheme, or that have already submitted a grant application which is being assessed, will not be considered.

Applications will open in rounds, with the first round being from December 2023 to January 2024. Applications submitted outside of these times will not be considered subject to significant material considerations and mitigating factors. These dates may vary at short notice depending on the level of applications the council receives.

The council reserves the right to close applications if the funding is likely to be committed, is committed or has been spent.

Once the EVCP is installed, the equipment will become the property of the applicant. Depending on the operating model to be adopted, it is the applicants' responsibility to pay any charges for the electricity, the supervision of the spaces, maintaining insurances and upkeeping the equipment itself.

EV Charging Points Grant Details

The intention of this grant is to facilitate the installation of EV Charging Points in rural areas of the Ashford Borough.

Eligibility Criteria

1. Applications are eligible from Parish Councils, Town Councils or Community Councils within the Ashford Borough boundary. In some cases applications may be accepted from other entities where all the eligibility criteria are met.

2. The site for the EVCP(s) must be located within the designated Rural area as defined under 'Rural England Prosperity Fund' by the Department for Environmental and Rural Affairs (Defra). Where the site or the wider land crosses across the designated area the Council reserves the right to assess these on a case by case basis. See Appendix A.

3. The site for the EVCP(s) must be wholly owned by the eligible applicant or Ashford Borough Council. In cases where this may not apply specifically, the applicant will need to evidence the ownership details and submit written approval for this project from the owner(s).

4. The site for the EVCP(s) must be publicly accessible to vehicles 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and not limit who can park there or charge parking fees unless the charges are payable to a Parish, Town or Community Council or Ashford Borough Council.

5. The EVCP(s) should be sourced from the approved list and meet the specifications detailed in the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles guidance.

6. The EVCP installer should be an approved organisation as detailed in the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles guidance.

What will the funding help cover

Ashford Borough Council will fund the install of the EV Charging Point and then hand over ownership of the charger to the organisation who applied.

The funding will contribute towards the capital costs of installing an EVCP including:

- Purchasing the EVCP(s) and associated equipment
- Installation costs
- Electricity Network connection costs
- Other capital costs directly associated with the installation phase.

What is not covered by the funding

Due to the capital nature of the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF), some costs associated with installing EVCP(s) may not be eligible for this grant. The applicant will need to show these costs have been considered and they are able to fund these separately. These include but are not limited to:

- Planning or Legal fees
- Electricity supply costs
- Insurances and ongoing maintenance costs
- Ancillary work to improve the accessibility of the site
- Applicant's admin costs

Levels of Grant

Applicants are required to provide a fully costed quote of the works being proposed. The assessment will consider this and, if successful, applicants will receive a grant equivalent to 80% of the cost of works. The maximum level of grant allowed under this scheme is £12,000.

In exceptional circumstances the council reserves the right to award a higher level of grant where this may be necessary and where there is supporting and significant additional evidence have been submitted.

Information and evidence needed for application

- A completed application form
- Evidence that:
    - The applicant is the freeholder or leaseholder or where written consent from the site owner to carry out the work, has been obtained and submitted
    - The applicant has the funds available for their share of the project costs (20%)
    - The applicant should demonstrate they have considered the Planning guidance in relation to their project and have submitted a Planning Application where necessary
- A completed site survey showing the viability and the type of connection that is possible
- At least three fully costed quotes for the work, including at least three quotes for the EVCP equipment from the approved OZEV model list and at least three quotes for the installation from the approved OZEV installer list.
- Details of any grants or funding received from a public authority in the previous three years
- Recent photos of the site, clearly showing the location proposed for the EVCP and access
- Any further information or evidence required or which the applicant considers relevant

Monitoring and Assurances

The grant will be paid to successful applicants once conditions are met such as (but not limited to):

- The works proposed are due to start imminently and be completed in a reasonable time
- Any permissions such as Planning Permission have been successfully obtained
- The EVCP has been ordered or bought and/or an installer has been appointed

The condition of payment for this grant will be included in the decision notification sent to the applicant and is discretionary (to be applied on a case by case basis). For grant applications requiring a Planning Application, the grant can only be paid if Planning Permission has been received by the applicant.

The council reserves the right to attend the site to monitor the progress of work until the expected end date detailed in the applicant's proposal. The council has the discretion to reclaim the grant funding if the conditions are not met within a reasonable time.

Terms and Conditions

- Grant applications (and relevant Planning Applications) must be made before work takes place
- Our staff must be allowed to inspect the works and see all relevant documentation
- It is the responsibility of applicants to comply with all relevant regulations and legislation
- Applicants agree to comply with the REPF and UKSPF marketing and branding guidelines linked to their project
- The applicant commits to monitoring and reporting on indicators such as the number of sessions (users) at the EVCP for up to 5 years after receiving the grant or the amount of CO2 saved in Kg/Year.
- Any grant money awarded, must be repaid within 3 years of the payment if:
    - The applicant removes or prevents the use of their EVCP(s) within 3 years of receiving the grant
    - The applicant does not maintain the equipment or the utilities connections during the 3 years after receiving the grant
    - Works are undertaken without obtaining the relevant permissions or licences as needed
    - The works are not undertaken

Subsidy Control (formerly State Aid)

A subsidy is where a public authority such as a Local Authority provides support to an enterprise that gives them an economic advantage, meaning equivalent support could not have been obtained on commercial terms.

On 4 January 2023, the UK's new subsidy control regime came into force, implementing a new subsidy regulation framework designed for the post-Brexit era. Underpinned by the Subsidy Control Act 2022 (the "Act"), related statutory instruments and government guidance, the new regime aims to grant public authorities the power to design and award subsidies in an agile way while complying with the UK's international commitments on subsidy control.

For smaller value subsidy awards, Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA) allows financial assistance of up to a maximum limit of £315,000 to be made to a single enterprise within a rolling period of three financial years (consisting of the current financial year and the two previous financial years), without the need to comply with the majority of the subsidy control requirements.

However, MFA requires a written declaration from the beneficiary confirming that the limit has not been exceeded before the subsidy can be awarded. This effectively mirrors the historic EU De Minimis regime but sets the threshold at a fixed sterling amount and at a higher level than previously.

Applicants will therefore be required to provide information and a declaration in relation to subsidies they may have received in the previous three years.

Exclusions to these grant schemes

- Organisations not listed in the eligibility criteria or entities that can access alternative Government funding for the installation of EV charging points.
- Projects or work that has already been undertaken will not be eligible. This funding is not retrospective.
- Sites that are located outside of the designated Rural area as defined by Defra for the purposes of this funding. See Appendix A.
- This funding should not be used as a wage support mechanism or for revenue costs such as ongoing maintenance or utilities costs.
- This funding cannot be used to pay for costs directly to Ashford Borough Council (for example Planning applications) or for significant work to the Council's land/property that falls within a schedule of maintenance and for which the council is responsible as owner.

Decisions

The funding available for these grant schemes is very limited and the council will likely need to prioritise applications to provide best value for money. Decisions will be taken by a panel on a monthly basis. Each round of decisions will prioritise eligible applications based on their location in relation to other EVCPs, the impact of their project as well as the deliverability of their proposal.

Applications will only be taken forward to be decided where all the relevant information and evidence has been submitted by the applicant. The decision to award any grants under this scheme will be taken by a panel chaired by the Head of Policy and Performance. The decision reached by the panel will be final and the council will not consider any appeals submitted. Applicants will subsequently be notified of the outcome of their application. For grant applications requiring Planning, the decision whether to award a grant will be dependent on the approval of Planning Permission.

In exceptional circumstances the council reserves the right to accept applications that may not meet all the criteria set out in this policy, where it can be shown that the impact of that proposal would have an exceptionally positive and wider reaching impact.

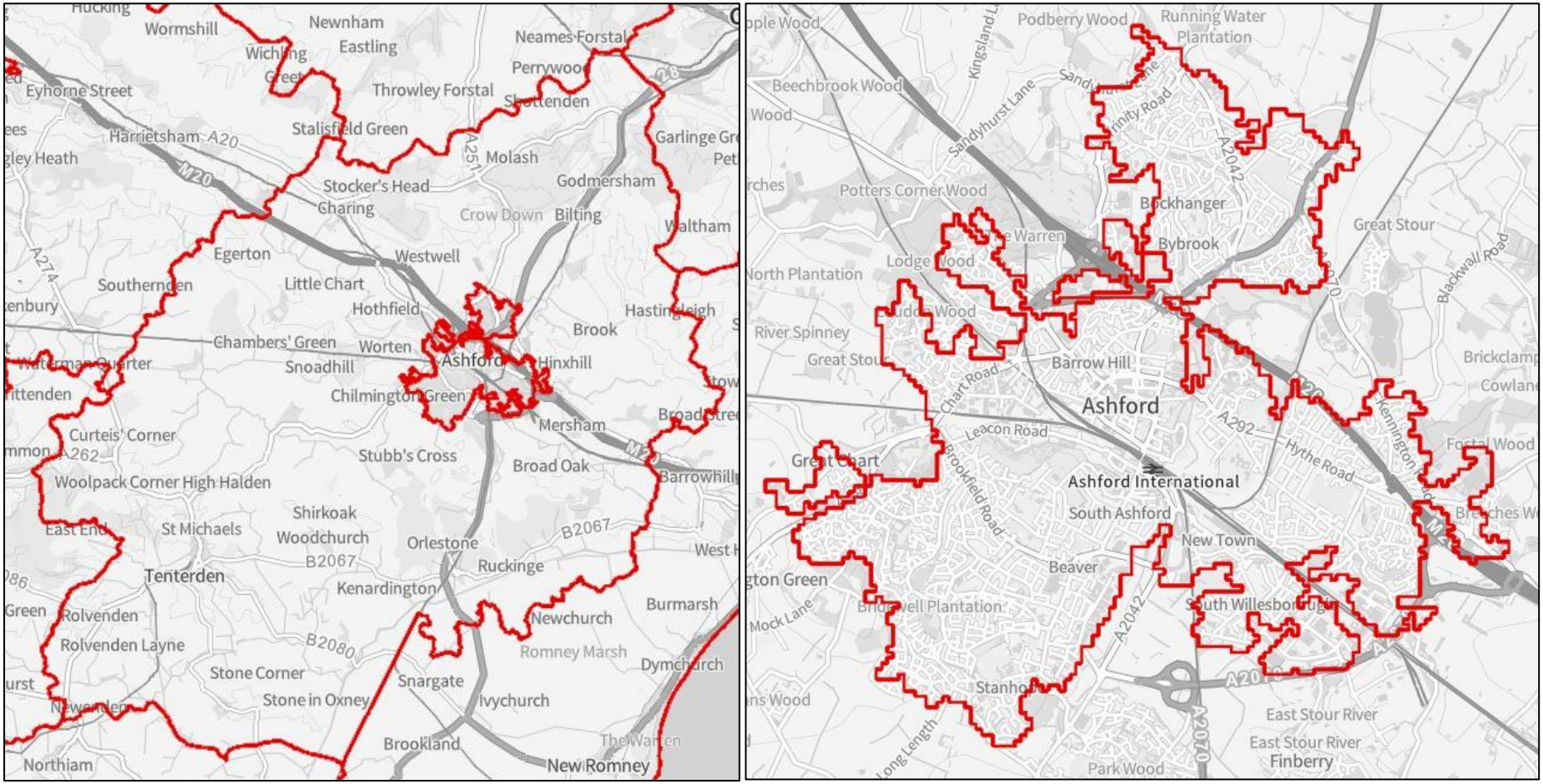
Due to its very limited nature, once the funding is completely allocated there will be no further applications or grants available to interested businesses.

Queries

All enquiries about this grant funding and this policy should contact prosperity.funding@ashford.gov.uk.

Appendix A

Ashford Rural EVCP Grants – Maps



Eligible areas: the areas outside the Ashford Urban Area. An interactive map is available on the Defra website here. In the table of contents please choose Administrative Geographies → Other Administrative Boundaries → Rural England Prosperity Fund)

Appendix B

Ashford REPF Programmes and other Defra Funding

Projects that have received or are eligible for any of the funds listed below (and any other Defra funding not listed) will not be eligible. Applicants who have received or are eligible for the below funds may be eligible subject to the proposed project not being eligible.

Ashford REPF Programmes

- Rural Electric Vehicle Charging Point Grants
- Rural Community Amenities Grants
- Rural Place and Provenance Grants

Defra Funding includes:

- Sustainable Farming Incentive
- Countryside Stewardship
- Landscape Recovery
- SFI Offers
- Species Survival Fund (via Heritage Fund)
- Farming in Protected Landscapes
- Calf Housing for Health and Welfare Grant
- England Woodland Creation Grant
- Woodland Creation Planning Grant
- Tree Health Pilot scheme 2023
- Farming Investment Fund
- Water Management Grant
- Slurry Infrastructure Grant
- Adding Value Grant
- Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) (including delinked payments)

FAQs

Why is my area or site not in the Rural area defined by Defra?

Defra have issued the boundaries for Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) and there is guidance on the designation of Rural that has been applied on the REPF webpages.

Who pays for the electricity?

Ultimately, the person using the charger could pay for the electricity and, depending on the circumstances, there may be a small profit for the community as well. At the outset, applicants would need to be the liable party for utilities bills, however by choosing an EVCP with payment options, could recover the costs of electricity.

What can we do with the revenue?

Any profit over and above the operation costs should be ring-fenced to cover maintenance of the parking spaces and upkeep of the asset. Depending on usage patterns there may be some revenue stream for the site holder which can be used to promote and publicise the facilities among other possibilities. This should encourage more people to visit and local residents to consider the switch to electric motoring sooner, with the subsequent improvements to the local environment and economy as added benefits.

Who owns the equipment once its installed?

Once the equipment is up and running, it becomes the property of the applicant and they operate it like any other asset. As the site holder or Parish, Town or Community Council will own the chargers, they will therefore be responsible for the cost of the electricity, the supervision of the parking spaces and the insurance of the equipment the same as any other asset they own.

Do we need a maintenance agreement?

We would advise discussing this with the chosen provider along with the relevant insurances required.