

# Now they want us to charge our electric cars from litter bins

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## Body

DRIVERS may soon be able to charge their electric cars using bins and street lamps, The Mail on Sunday can reveal.

Government Ministers are examining proposals to convert ordinary street objects into 'smart' versions, which can offer free wi-fi and 5G, and charge your car.

A pilot scheme has been launched, with six councils across the UK given funding to find new uses for 'street furniture'. They will begin by rolling out street lamps with free internet access and electric vehicle charging, as well as developing the ways in which other objects can be converted.

Ministers have confirmed that this includes 'smart bins' - where current street bins would be upgraded to allow people to charge their cars and use the internet.

Other street furniture that could be converted includes benches, bus stops, traffic lights and CCTV columns, the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology said.

Industry experts welcomed the plans and said innovation and more public charge points are key to a wider rollout of electric cars.

But critics have questioned the plan's viability. Conservative MP for South Thanet, Craig Mackinlay, who runs the Net Zero Scrutiny Group, said it amounted to '**greenwashing**'. Writing in the MoS, Mr Mackinlay said: 'It is a pie-in-the-sky solution which comes nowhere near to matching the scale of the need for high-powered chargers, were electric vehicles really to have a monopoly on roads.'

'At the heart of the policy lies the obsession with a nationwide switch to electric vehicles... but a key problem is that Britain looks like it will have nothing like enough effective charger points to support this change. That was one of the reasons for the Prime Minister's decision to push back the target for phasing out petrol and diesel vehicles from 2030 to 2035.'

The pilot scheme will see a total of £1.3 million of Government funding given to councils in Cambridgeshire, Tees Valley, Westminster in London, Kingston upon Thames, North Ayrshire and Oxfordshire.

The plans would involve digging up streets to connect the objects to the grid. This would be less disruptive with objects that already use electricity, such as street lamps.

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Edmund King, president of the AA, said lamp posts, bins and benches could provide options for rural drivers and people who do not have their own charge points, but added that such street objects would be slow chargers.

'People should not be expected to pull up and charge in 20 minutes,'

he said. 'But that's not necessarily a bad thing. Slow charging is more cost-effective.'

He added: 'One of the advantages to using existing street furniture is that you don't want to clutter up streets [with extra charge points].'

'We need lots of innovation and new ideas. Whatever you like it or not, this is a new dawn.'

Technology Secretary Michelle Donelan told the MoS: 'We're always looking for new, innovative ways to make the most of advances in science and technology.'

'Smart street lamps are the first step to making everyday infrastructure play a full role in building a better future for the UK.'

'Whether you like it or not, this is a new dawn'

## Graphic

PLUG IN HERE: Ministers hope to convert lamp posts and benches to public electric vehicle charging stations

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