REGIONAL TRANSPORT FORUM – 11th November 2011

ELECTRIC VEHICLE (EV) CHARGING INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE EAST OF ENGLAND

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Purpose of report:

- To update members on progress with the Government’s ‘plugged in places’ initiative in the East of England;
- to set out next steps for the programme; and
- to ask members to continue to act as advocates for the initiative.

Recommendation:

1. Note the contents of this report and accompanying presentation;
2. to note that Local Authorities can now receive an improved grant of 75% against the cost of electric vehicle post acquisition and installation; and
3. to agree to act as advocates for the programme both within their organisations, and in their dealings with other partners including businesses and Local Enterprise Partnerships, so that a comprehensive EV charging network is established across the East of England.

1 Background

1.1 The Forum has previously received papers and presentations from representatives of EEDA and EValu8 Transport Innovations Ltd on the EValu8 ‘plugged in places’ initiative in the East of England and so members will already be aware of much of the background to this project.

1.2 In summary, however, the project:

- Is part of a wider £30 million government initiative to provide match-funding for the installation of recharging points for electric vehicles and has a total value of around £7 million, with up to £2.9 million match-funding from government, with the rest coming from EEDA, the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and match funding commitments from private and public sector partners for recharging posts;

- is developing a network of EV charging points across the East of England composed of up to 1,200 post-mounted recharging points, 400 home charging points, installations in 500 ‘EV-ready’ Eco-Homes, and 8 rapid chargers;

- this network, known as Source East (see http://www.sourceeast.net/), will give member drivers unlimited access to charging points in the network. Ecotricity, who are supporting the network, will ensure that electricity comes from renewable sources;
the project is being delivered by EVAlu8 Transport Innovations Ltd, a not-for-profit company set up by the University of Hertfordshire to manage the delivery of EVAlu8 project following the proposed closure of EEDA who led on the early stages of the project;

EVAlu8 will fund 50% of eligible costs for the installation of up to 600 double-headed recharging posts (1,200 recharging points) across the East of England;

However, as a result of a recent announcement from OLEV, EVAlu8 can now fund 75% of eligible costs for installations by Local Authorities as a further incentive to expand the network and help deliver a low carbon transport system in the East of England;

In addition a 50% discount on home charging units is also available.

Members should note that these opportunities are only available until March 2013 so are time-limited. Local Transport Authorities, and other interested parties, are therefore encouraged to make early contact with EVAlu8 to ensure that these opportunities can be taken advantage of.

2 Progress to Date

2.1 A key initial element of the project has been to deliver early installation of up to 4 EEDA-funded recharging posts in each of the East of England’s 11 local transport authorities. Good progress has been made on many of these which is important as it has provided the project with early momentum. The EVAlu8 team are grateful for the help and assistance provided by officers at the local transport authorities in progressing this initial element.

2.2 This initial work has provided us with a number of useful learning points that have enabled us to improve the delivery process for future installations including refining the ‘post host agreements’ which set out the duties and responsibilities of organisations acquiring posts from EVAlu8, and moving towards accelerating the work of Distribution Network Operators (or ‘DNOs’) so that earlier cost estimates and more rapid connections can be achieved.

2.3 We have significant support from a large number of our public and private sector partners to expand the network further. However we are keen to maintain the project’s momentum and develop and deliver significantly greater numbers of charging points across the East of England (see next steps).

3 Next Steps

3.1 The development of low carbon vehicle technologies and infrastructure is an important element of national Government transport policy (see for example the Department for Transport’s recent “Making the Connection: the Plug-In Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy”, and the Department for Communities and Local Government’s consultation on a draft National Planning Policy Framework). It can also make an important contribution to local transport policy given the support given in many Local Transport Plans (LTP) to increasing the take-up of EVs.

3.2 However, this is also a significant economic opportunity for the East of England’s many high-tech businesses. Already the East of England’s low carbon industry forms 9% of the UK market and is worth in excess of £10 billion. The emerging
Source East network will provide a test bed for businesses to develop new technologies, products and services across the transport, built environment, digital and energy sectors, and the EV sector itself brings significant opportunities across a new value chain for the development, deployment and integration of plug-in vehicles.

3.3 We are therefore keen to accelerate our delivery of charging posts and rapidly build up the Source East charging network so that we can support these wider policies and opportunities. Given that our window for providing financial support to establishing the network is only open until March 2013 there is a unique and time-limited opportunity to build upon EValu8’s work to date and really progress this aspect of the East of England’s transport infrastructure. The opportunity should be particularly attractive to Local Authorities given that we are now able to offer a 75% grant against eligible costs for charging post installation.

3.4 We would also greatly value the support of Forum members, and their officers, in further raising awareness of EValu8 and acting as advocates for the EValu8 programme, for example, through:

- Alerting other departments within your authorities to these funding opportunities available when appropriate;
- Mentioning these opportunities to colleagues in other authorities, including lower tier authorities, so that they too are aware;
- Alerting colleagues in the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) to the project so that they can promote take-up;
- Where appropriate, alerting businesses to the opportunities to acquire low cost charging posts at their sites through the EValu8 programme;
- Promoting EV infrastructure, and the funding opportunities set out in this paper, in your dealings with planning applications and in working with planning colleagues.

3.5 For further information on how to apply for funding, a discussion on the process, or any other aspects of the project, please contact the EValu8 team at info@evalu8-ti.org.uk or call 01707 284742. Further information, including answers to a large number of ‘FAQs’, is also available at our website http://www.evalu8-ti.org.uk/.