Wireless power transfer tech: Trials set for England's offroads

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Credit: Scott Meltzer/public domain

Wireless charging technology that is built into the road, powering electric cars as they move, is to undergo trials on England's offroads. Announced on Tuesday, the technology will address the need to power

up electric and hybrid vehicles on England's roads. The trials will get under way later this year.

Key questions that the trial will address: will the technology work safely and effectively? How will the tech allow drivers of ultra-low emission vehicles to travel longer distances without needing to stop and charge the car's battery? The announcement referred to "dynamic wireless power transfer" technologies where cars are recharged while on the move.

Transport Minister Andrew Jones said that the government is already committing £500 million over the next five years to keep Britain at the forefront of this technology. The trials will involve fitting vehicles with wireless technology and testing the equipment, installed underneath the road, to replicate motorway conditions.

These are offroad trials and are expected to last for approximately 18 months. Subject to the results, they could be followed by on-road trials.

Highways England, the government-owned company in place for managing the core road network in England, had already commissioned a feasibility study for preparing a strategic road network for electric vehicles. TRL, a research, consultancy, testing and certification group for transport, was commissioned to look into Wireless Power Transfer (WPT) technology for use on motorways and roads to prepare for greater EV take-up.

TRL made the point at that time that "the purpose of the project is not to find an alternative to current plug-in charging infrastructure but rather to develop a comprehensive charging eco-system capable of delivering power to EVs via different methods."

TRL added, "This is to facilitate greater and more flexible use of EVs in the UK, overcome range anxiety and allow switching to zero emission

vehicles for vehicle types which have traditionally been accepted as not suitable for electrification, e.g. HGVs and coaches."

To be sure, range anxiety has been one of the talked about factors challenging future uptake of EVs. Brian Milligan said in BBC News earlier this year, though, that figures from the UK car industry suggested "we might finally be waking up to the electric revolution." He noted a jump in purchases of plug-in hybrids and that there were many more plug-in models to chose from; he also noted a network of charging points had expanded, in places in the UK where drivers can plug in.

Meanwhile, in the United States, "Some of the factors contributing to the relatively fast adoption of electric vehicles (EV) in some American metropolitan markets have been identified and characterized by a new study from the International Council on Clean Transportation (ICCT)," reported *Clean Technica*. The dominant factors included, among others, a broader range of offerings, as well as a more developed charging infrastructure.

More information: www.gov.uk/government/news/off … -highways-technology