



# Big Ideas

## MILTON KEYNES: LOW CARBON INITIATIVES "Incentivising the use of electric cars through innovative partnerships"

### Summary of policy

Milton Keynes aims to be an exemplar community for low carbon living and has developed an overall strategy to this end, working with key local partners - in particular the Homes and Communities Agency. In order to promote the take up of electric vehicles Milton Keynes Council has partnered with the Renault-Nissan Alliance.

### Description

The Council has undertaken to provide a charging infrastructure and incentives such as free public parking and electricity for electric cars whilst Renault-Nissan has guaranteed a supply of electric vehicles (there is limited world-wide availability) together with technical support and marketing.

The Council is working with other UK cities through a government sponsored scheme to ensure co-ordination in the development of a national electric vehicle infrastructure and has been awarded funding by the government's Plugged in Places scheme for the installation of charging posts.

At the same time the Council has partnered with Central Networks Division of EON to bid for Ofgem Low Carbon Networks Funding for a city-wide smart grid scheme that would provide an overall intelligent power supply and learning environment for the testing of new low carbon technologies and promoting public acceptance.

### What problems does the policy solve?

The distinctive grid design of Milton Keynes facilitates ease of car use but, together with the city's low housing densities, poses challenges for the efficient operation of public transport and the reduction of carbon emissions.

A strategy based on electric cars linked to a smart grid programme involving local low carbon

energy generation has (a) cut through a sterile public versus private transport debate, switching the focus to the integration of personal and public mobility, and (b) provided a route to addressing carbon reduction targets whilst maintaining our strategic advantage as an easily accessible location for business by road.

Within the overall strategy, schemes for the monitoring and social marketing of the use of new technologies will draw upon and enhance the capacities of local centres of academic excellence (Open University, Cranfield University and University Centre MK) and help to attract and grow knowledge-based industries.

The benefits to the community are thus principally around future jobs growth, improved mobility, carbon reduction and the future-proofing of new development. MK Council has led this initiative and in so doing has boosted its community leadership role and forged powerful new partnerships with national government, global private sector companies and utility organisations.

### Can it be adopted elsewhere?

Incentive schemes for the uptake of electric vehicles can be developed readily by any council. However, because the global supply of electric vehicles is so limited at present it is perhaps more difficult to develop partnerships with car manufacturers as only a relatively small number of locations can be priorities for supply.

This will change as the production of electric vehicles gathers pace. Likewise, individual councils can easily install charging infrastructure but the supply of government grants is limited at present and subject to competitive processes.

Much of the attraction of Milton Keynes as a location for experimentation lies in its history of innovation, its flexible infrastructure and the opportunities for installing new technologies that arise from rapid housing growth and the

development of new communities. So whilst the piloting of low carbon technologies can be undertaken in any location, perhaps few locations are as well placed to experiment and develop such comprehensive schemes.

### What difficulties had to be overcome?

The Council was a relatively late arrival to the national scheme to develop an electric vehicle charging infrastructure and the opportunities presented by Milton Keynes for trialling new approaches were not well known.

At the outset, an overall programme strategy was commissioned from Arup, a consultancy with a global reputation for developing new communities and low carbon technologies. The resulting strategic document was a significant asset in explaining our ambition and context to potential partners and in making bids for government funds. The Council has made numerous presentations about its programme to local and national audiences as part of a deliberate strategy to promote the opportunities for the city and potential partners.

Organising the complex inter-relationships between different components of the overall programme has been a major challenge. This has been addressed through dedicated project staff on the part of the council and commercial partners and the adoption of programme management disciplines.

The project involves rapidly evolving technologies and the council has convened regular meetings of the project Steering Group with an Advisory Panel comprising local and national experts. This ensures the direction and content of the programme is informed and challenged at key stages in its development.

There has been strong local political backing for the scheme, including formal Council resolutions. This has helped provide reassurance to partners who are looking for long-term relationships.

### What financial implications?

The Council has used successful funding bids as leverage to attract other funding and partner contributions, including significant private sector investment. It will forgo revenue income from some car parking spaces but in the main the programme seeks to align its activity with existing development plans and to adapt these where possible and appropriate.

### Has it proven successful?

To date the main achievements are the production of a clear strategy, securing funding and the establishment of partnership agreements with large multi-national companies.

Milton Keynes has successfully positioned itself at the forefront of UK cities in developing low carbon living and has attracted a good deal of publicity and attention, including a steady stream of potential national and overseas investors. These arrangements bode well for implementation and future progress.

### What advice would you give to those adopting the approach?

Critical success factors have included the establishment at the outset of a clear vision and leadership. Potential investors and partners require a confident partner with a clear strategy and efficient arrangements for liaison. Political leadership is also vital in promoting confidence in partners and in supporting a strategy that is publicly rather than market driven.

## For more information

For more information on the Milton Keynes Council's commitment to low carbon living please visit, [www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/mklowcarbonliving/](http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/mklowcarbonliving/).

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