

Fleet electrification for SMEs: sort the charging first, then the vans



Most small fleets go electric in the wrong order. The vans get ordered, the delivery date arrives, and only then does someone ask where they are going to charge. The result is vans parked on a public rapid charger at three times the cost, or a rushed install that cannot grow with the fleet.

Flip it round. Sort the charging first and the van decision gets easier, cheaper and safer. Here is the order we recommend to the SMEs we work with, and how the two grants still open in 2026 fit in.

1. Work out what each van actually does in a day

Before looking at a single van or charger, pull a month of mileage for each vehicle and note where it sleeps at night. For most local service, trade and delivery vans the answer is reassuring: a 10 hour overnight charge at 7kW adds roughly 70kWh, more than most mid size electric vans use in a normal working day. The vehicles that need more thought are the long distance and multi shift ones, and they are usually a minority.

2. Decide where the vans will charge

- **At the depot:** the cheapest and most controllable option when vans return to base each night.
- **At drivers' homes:** suits vans that go home with the driver. You will need a fair way to reimburse the electricity, and a home charger at each address.
- **On the public network:** a backup, not a plan. Rapid charging can cost several times the price of depot electricity.

Most SMEs end up with a mix: depot charging for the vans that come back, home charging for the rest, and a fuel card for the odd long day.

3. Size the depot charging properly

Vans parked overnight rarely need more than 7kW each. Vans that turn round during the day, or run double shifts, may need 22kW or a DC charger. The limit is usually not the chargers but the building's supply, and smart load management lets far more vans share it than most people expect. We explain how to check in [how to calculate the electrical load for your growing fleet](#).

If you plan to add vans over the next few years, lay ducting and cable capacity for the later bays now. Digging the yard once costs far less than digging it twice.

4. Then choose the vans

With the charging plan in place, van choice becomes a simple check list: real winter range against your longest regular day, payload with the battery on board, and the van's onboard AC charger rating, which decides how fast it will actually charge on a 22kW unit (we explain why in [why your car, not the charger, sets your AC charging speed](#)). Our [guide to electric vans](#) is a good starting point. The government van grant is taken off at the dealer, so there is no separate application.

5. Use the right grant for the charging

Workplace Charging Scheme. Up to £500 per socket, capped at 75% of cost, for up to 40 sockets across all your sites. It covers fleet charging at your premises, but chargers must be installed and claimed before the scheme closes on 31 March 2027. Best for smaller fleets ready to install this winter. [See the timeline](#).

Depot Charging Scheme. Built for operators of electric vans, HGVs and coaches that charge at a depot. Window 2 is open now, from 28 October 2026 until 29 January 2027,, for projects starting from April 2027 and finished by 31 March 2028. In the first window it paid 70% of chargepoint and civil costs, up to £1 million per organisation; the rate for window 2 has not yet been confirmed and is expected to be lower. Applications are first come, first served, you get one application per organisation (covering as many sites as you like), and the grant agreement must be signed before any costs are incurred. It does not pay for grid connection upgrades. [Check whether your depot qualifies](#).

A single charger can only be funded by one OZEV grant, so the choice comes down to timing and size. Installing a handful of sockets before March 2027 points to the Workplace Charging Scheme. A larger depot project for 2027 points to the Depot Charging Scheme. Some fleets do both: a small first phase now, then the depot build out with DCS funding.

The short version

- Measure what each van does before choosing anything.
- Plan where every van will charge overnight.
- Size the depot to your supply, with room to grow.
- Pick vans that fit the charging, not the other way round.
- Book the survey in time for the right grant window.

See how we plan and install [fleet EV charging](#), from a few vans at a single unit to multi site depots.

Plan the charging before you order the vans

A free site survey checks your supply, your yard and your vans' daily mileage, and tells you which grant fits and how to phase the install. No obligation, and we confirm the survey within one working day.

[Book a free site survey](#) or call **0121 661 7969**