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Zemo Partnership's Andy Eastlake

What's in a name? We need to clarify what we call our chargepoints

Fast, slow, rapid, standard, ultra, mega, super – all names used for chargepoints here in the UK, but they're not consistently applied to common power bands. Bringing in an international dimension, it gets worse; the names used elsewhere often vary even more and have been leaching into UK brochures and websites. Couple this with the folly of just counting chargepoint numbers without any reference to their capability (ie a 350kW charger can theoretically deliver 70 times the energy of a 5kW lamppost one) and we have a recipe for confusion and uncertainty about our recharging infrastructure. So it's no wonder that the less 'EV savvy' can get confused and, consequently, deterred from making the switch to electric.

Of course the excellent Zapmap statistics have become the de facto standard, but the latest regulations don't fully align with their bandings and even they agree the situation is far less than ideal where words like 'Fast' do not help users understand what they should expect or how they should use a charging opportunity.

So, at Zemo we've been working in the background to coordinate a common approach. I'm pleased that the community has now agreed a set of power bands by which we group chargepoints (<8kW, 8-49kW, 50-149kW and >150kW). But the question of what label we should use for each band and how to describe their use pattern and typical locations, still remain. One school of thought is to adopt an approach similar to mobile phones. No one really knows what a 'G' is or how fast it will be, but we know that 5 is better than 4 (and 2 and 3 are being switched off!). Personally I'm not a fan of this, since as we know home (or standard or slow?) charging below 8kW is actually the bulk of charging done today and is likely to remain so. It's also the main area where 'Smart' or even bidirectional charging will happen. So calling it 'slow' might send the wrong message about its usefulness. And is 'rapid' better than 'fast' or 'high speed'?

To help develop our thoughts, Zemo has published a survey for newsletter readers to have their say on how to name and describe chargepoint bands. Of course we really need to ask the non-EV driving community what will work for them, since readers of this magazine are likely already very well attuned to the charging questions, but to narrow down our options we'd welcome your views. Of course, as GF readers will also know, charging is more complex than just the power output of a chargepoint, with vehicle capability, charging curves, battery conditions and power-sharing all potentially impacting the activity. But helping drivers choose the right charger for their situation and journey and then delivering on the expectation will help us all make the shift to zero emissions more quickly. With the new bandings hopefully being adopted later this year, Zemo definitely support labelling (and communicating) the chargepoint power capability clearly. But as I've said before, words matter and consistency in how we name and describe chargepoints is a crucial first step to helping educate and encourage the next cohort of drivers into EVs. So, please do have your say on chargepoint terminology, to help us work with the wider community on the right names. As George Herbert said, "good words are worth much and cost little".

FURTHER INFORMATION

Zemo Survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/6JZCZPH>