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# Westminster Notions and North-Eastern Realities

Imagining Decarbonised Automobility in Post-Colonial County Durham

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# Introduction



I think that cars today are almost the exact equivalent of the great gothic cathedrals; I mean the supreme creation of an era, conceived with passion by unknown artists, and consumed in image if not in usage by the whole population – Roland Barthes



**A Bentley parked in Seaham**

# Introduction Cont.



A sociotechnical imaginary is a 'collectively held, institutionally stabilized, and publicly performed visions of desirable futures, animated by shared understandings of forms of social life and social order attainable through, and supportive of, advances in science and technology' – Sheila Jasanoff

## Making the Connection

The Plug-In Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy



June 2011

**Report originating current EV policy**

# The Home



- Central to the Westminster position is the vision that the majority of EVs will be charged at home.
- Specifically, ‘we want people to recharge plug-in vehicles at home, at night, after the evening peak’.
- This is informed by the English Housing Survey Housing Stock Report.

## 4. Recharging at home



Recharging at home

### Recharging at home

We want people to recharge plug-in vehicles at home, at night, after the evening peak

**The report's image of a home**

# The Home Cont.



- The DCC believe this vision of off-street parking does not accord with County Durham's reality.
- SOSCI seeks to address this through installing charge points throughout County Durham.
- These will be accessible 24/7 and ideally no one will have to travel an appreciable distance to reach one.



**A DCC EV charge point**

# The Journey



- Westminster consistently frames the use of the EV with reference to the commute.
- There has been no discussion of how the COVID imposed turn to working-from-home is consequential for such a vision.
- It is only more recently that they mentioned the possibility of other sorts of journeys.



**Working from home**

## The Journey Cont.



- The DCC was agnostic about how EVs were used.
- It emphasised that installing an EV charge-point within a community could allow for increased tourism.
- It also worked with a car club with a very different view of the journeys one might make.



**Derwent Valley Car Club**

# Conclusion



- The DCC and Westminster's imaginings of EVs' roles in the future of British transportation diverge significantly.
- This derives in part from different values and ideological concerns.
- However, it is also informed by different understandings and awareness of the ways that places inform people's mobility.