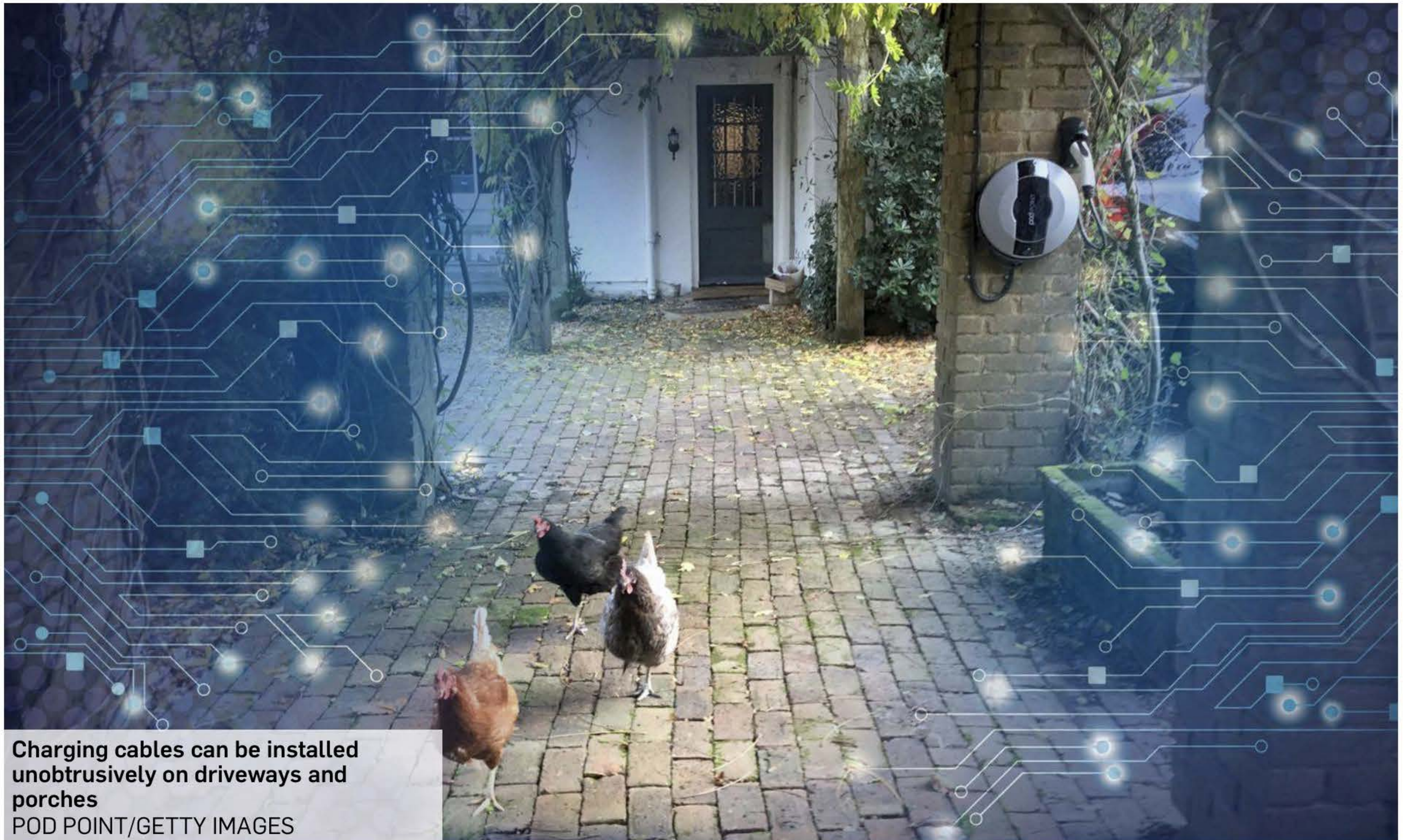


How to get an electric car charging point

From government grants to burying the cable, *Sarah Lonsdale* reports on the process



Charging cables can be installed unobtrusively on driveways and porches

POD POINT/GETTY IMAGES

It's the new gold rush. The government's recent announcement that from 2030 sales of new diesel and petrol cars will be banned has prompted a mad scramble to provide adequate numbers of electric vehicle (EV) charging points for the expected millions of electric cars that will take to the roads in the next few years.

Supermarkets, local authori-

ties and the government are racing to install a network of public charging-points — some free, others costly. There are just under 36,000 of these across the country, although the vast majority are on domestic driveways. In March more than 120,000 domestic charging points had been installed, with homeowners taking advantage of the government's grant scheme, which

pays £350 towards the cost of the installation.

"We're all scrambling to get trained up as fast as possible," says Keith Witten, who runs Cathedral Electricals in Canterbury, Kent, and has recently added EV charging-point installation to his list of services. "Demand has soared."

To qualify for the government grant, homeowners must be owners of — or be leasing —

a post-2016 electric car, or have one on order, and have dedicated off-street parking at their home. According to the latest English Housing Survey statistics, four out of five privately owned houses have a garage or other off-street parking; this number falls to just over half of all privately rented homes and just one quarter of local authority homes. People with front gardens but no driveway can apply to their local planning authority for a dropped kerb, which costs about £1,500 to install, but isn't necessarily straightforward. "If there is a lamppost or a tree in the way, the council may well not give permission," Witten says, "in which case residents will have to rely on on-street charging points."

Planning permission is not required for charging points mounted on a wall or post as long as the point is not within 2m of the highway or the stand is not more than 2.3m tall. If your home is listed, however, you will need listed-building consent.

In terms of driveway aesthetics, the round plastic cable holster can sometimes jar, particularly in period homes. They are usually visible as the standard cable length between the charging point and the car is 5m. "There is the option of installing a freestanding pole, which some owners provide, either in wood or wrought iron," says James McKemey, the head of insights at the installer [Pod Point](#). "In these

TAKE CHARGE

- There are two standard types of charger: the slower 3.7kW charger replenishes the battery over six to eight hours and costs about £450 after the grant has been applied; the faster 7kW one charges in three to four hours and costs about £550. Stand-alone posts with buried cables are more expensive.
- Some installers offer chargers with load balancing that charge your car when other household demands, such as cooking and heating, are at their lowest, avoiding surges.
- Choose between a tethered charger, where the cable is attached to the charge point,

cases, we bury the cable, and then it's possible to install the charge point in a leafy or unobtrusive part of the driveway," he says. "We run a monthly competition among our installers for the prettiest installation and we've got some beauties. Many are barely discernible through the shrubbery."

The installation usually takes less than half a day and, according to Professor Peter Wells, the director of the Centre for Automotive Industry Research in Cardiff, unlike other "green" schemes such as solar panels and cavity-wall insulation, so far the industry has not attracted cowboys. However, he warns that any-

or a universal socket where the cable is kept in the car boot. Tethered units only work with one connector type, so may need to be changed if you change your car at a later date.

- Charging costs between 2p and 4p a mile, depending on the size and weight of car, and which electricity tariff you are on. This compares with petrol and diesel cars which cost on average 12p-14p a mile.
- [Guidance for grant applications](#)
- [List of approved installers](#)

thing to do with electricity needs care and an approved installer.

"Domestic electricity rings aren't designed for the extra loading, so you need a special cable running from the charge point to the fuse box. Some old fuse boxes may also need to be upgraded. But the plus side is fantastic," he says. "In the three years that I've had an electric car I haven't once had to visit a petrol station. On cold winter days you don't have to have the engine running for ten minutes, chugging out noxious fumes while you warm it up. It just quietly and cleanly switches on." ■