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Madrid reverses the chargers with electric car plan

Giles Tremlett in Madrid

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Some 30 telephone boxes will be converted to form part of a test network of recharging points in Madrid, Barcelona and Seville. Photograph: Leon Neal/AFP/Getty Images

The rise of the mobile phone has left the streets of Madrid littered with increasingly redundant telephone booths. But these underused installations are now set to play a key role in [Spain's electric car](#) revolution under government plans to make them part of a network of electric charging stations for vehicles.

Some 30 telephone boxes have been earmarked to form part of a test network of 546 state-subsidised recharging points in Madrid, Barcelona and Seville.

Phone boxes are often ideally placed close to the curbs of pavements and already have their own electricity supply, making them relatively easy to adapt.

The Spanish government will spend €10m (£8.7m) on kick-starting the use of electric cars over the next two years, with €1.5m going on recharging points. Madrid city council said that telephone boxes were a possibility, but that it was still in the process of identifying the recharging spots it planned to build.

Barcelona city council said it already had an agreement with the Endesa electricity company to install recharging points attached to "intelligent lampposts" in the street. It will have 191 recharging points installed within two years.

Companies tendering for services to town halls and government offices will earn extra points if they can show that they are using electric-powered vehicles.

"The aim is to introduce some 2,000 vehicles into cities over the next two years," industry ministry Miguel Sebastián said.

The mayor of Madrid, Alberto Ruiz-Gallardón, said owners of electric cars would be able to park for free in the city and would have their car tax cut by 75%. He predicted that electric cars would eventually become obligatory in city centres.

The mayor of Seville, Alfredo Sánchez Monteseirín, said he hoped electric cars would help limit pollution damage to his city's historic monuments.

Electric vehicles would fit in well with Spain's extensive network of wind-powered generators. Wind turbines remain operative during periods of low demand at night, which is when car batteries could be charged up.

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