



Forecourt convenience stores generate £4.7 billion in sales

A report by the Association of Convenience Stores looks at the state of the market and demands help from the Government to install EV chargers.

The UK's Association of Convenience Stores (ACS) has released its 2020 Forecourt Report this week, which details the importance of forecourt stores to their communities, the jobs they provide locally and the range of services.

Of the 8,380 petrol stations in the UK, around 90% (7,398) include some form of a convenience store. These shops generated £4.7 billion (\$6.1bn) of non-fuel sales over the last year. The increased importance of convenience stores can be seen by the increasing investment in these – forecourts have invested an average of £25,657 per store in this period, with 11% of investing in a full store refit. Around 30% (2,538) of these are full convenience stores with a wide range of services for motorists on the go and, on many occasions, parking outside.

The majority of the convenience stores are dealer owned (65%) with 18% being company owned and 17% owned by the various hypermarket players in the UK. The majority of stores are owned by men (60%), and the Asian or Asian British (Pakistan, Bangladesh, India...) community have 28% of the market.

"Forecourts have faced a number of challenges over the last year, especially with the drop in fuel sales during lockdown, but in response to these challenges they have stepped up to offer new services and a wider range of groceries to keep their communities going," said ACS chief executive James Lowman.

Some 77% of independent forecourts have engaged in some form of community activity in the last year, with one in five (20%) donating to a local food bank.

Help retailers install EV chargers, asks ACS

In the letter, ACS outlines support for an incentive led approach to EV expansion in line with consumer demand. Under current proposals, 'large forecourts' could be required to install charging facilities, even if they're not appropriate or necessary for that location. ACS has also called for EV charging points and their associated parking spaces to be exempt from business rates to remove another barrier to investment.

There are currently over 250 charging points located on over 150 forecourts across the UK (excluding charging points at service stations), part of a total UK network of over 12,000 charging locations in places like retail car parks, office car parks, on street locations and transport hubs.

“While the pace of change on EV charging is an exciting prospect, it also provides challenges for retailers that are looking to invest in an EV charging facility, as there is the risk that their solution could be rendered obsolete within a short period of time. It’s essential therefore that the Government supports forecourt retailers and other EV charging providers and helps them to invest in the long term future of the charging network,” said Lowman.

The full 2020 Forecourt Report is available here: <http://bit.ly/ForecourtReport20>