Zaptec

The property manager's guide to EV charger payments for apartment blocks →



Included in this guide

Practical advice on how to offer EV charging to residents without the billing headache.

How shared-parking billing actually works, how to design it so it runs itself, and what to look for in a solution.

What's in this guide

→ Why residential home chargers cannot simply be installed in an apartment block

→ How providing EV charging as a service actually works in shared parking

→ How EV charging as a service differs between new-build and retrofit properties

→ Tariff options that make charging affordable for residents

→ What the resident experience looks like

→ What to look for in a EV charging as a service solution

→ How Zaptec approaches EV billing for managing agents



Why most EV billing setups make life harder for managing agents, not easier

If residents are starting to ask about EV charging, you have a problem most managing agents don't know how to size up yet. The kind of charger that lives happily on the side of a house does not live equally happily in a shared car park. The moment the second or third resident wants one, the network operator caps further installs, and other residents get locked out.

The version that works is a communal charging system on the landlord supply, with billing that runs itself. Done properly, you set a per-kWh rate once, residents pay through an app, and the money lands in the building's account every month. Done improperly, you spend your evenings issuing invoices and reconciling meter readings, and you become the person residents complain to when a charger breaks.

This guide explains how to get the version that works, and what a managing agent should look for, regardless of which manufacturer or platform they end up with.



Welcome to the guide

"The mistake most blocks make with EV charging isn't the hardware. It's choosing a setup that quietly turns the managing agent into the de facto utility provider. That's avoidable. Done right, the system bills itself, residents get a fair price, and the agent's involvement is close to zero."

Michael Baybrook
Managing Director, Zaptec UK



Most property managers we speak to want one thing from EV charging: for it not to land on their desk...

...that's a reasonable request, and it's achievable, but only if the right hardware, billing platform, and tariff are chosen up front. Make those three decisions well and the system runs itself for a decade. Make any of them poorly and the admin lands back with you, every month.

In this guide we explain how to set up EV charging in apartment blocks so the billing handles itself, and your residents get a fair price.

You'll discover

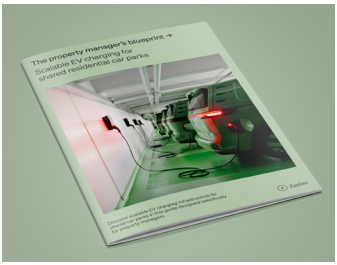
- → Why individual home chargers can lock a block out of further charging infrastructure
- → The three roles in a working billing setup
- → How to design billing for new-builds vs. retrofitted buildings
- → Tariff options that make charging affordable for apartment residents
- → What residents see when they plug in, and the friction points that cause complaints
- → How to evaluate a billing solution
- → How Zaptec approaches EV billing for managing agents



Getting set up right

The fastest way to get EV billing wrong is to get the infrastructure wrong.

If you haven't already worked through the infrastructure question, we recommend reading our guide first:



The property manager's blueprint →
Scalable EV charging for shared residential car parks

→ Read the guide

This guide assumes those infrastructure decisions have already been made and focuses on the billing considerations that follow.

A few things are worth being aware of before the billing conversation, because they shape what's possible later.

Why individual home chargers create a queuing problem

On a single domestic supply, a 7 kW charger is straightforward. In an apartment block, every charger added to a resident's individual circuit eats into the building's total electrical capacity. The Distribution Network Operator (DNO) approves connections in order. Once the available capacity is allocated, the next resident asking for a charger is told no.

In practice, this means three early adopters can lock out the rest of the block. Most managing agents don't see the trap until the fourth or fifth resident raises it, and by then, the cheapest moment to design around it has already passed.

The right charger for shared carparks isn't the same charger you'd put on a house

Hardware designed for individual homes does not load-balance across a shared site. For shared parking, you need:

- → A commercial-grade charger built for clustering (the Zaptec Pro, for example) rather than a domestic unit (Zaptec Go).
- → A single-cable install method, so chargers can be added cost-effectively on both labour and materials, and can be installed later without re-cabling the car park.
- → Dynamic power distribution, so the building's available capacity is shared intelligently rather than allocated one-to-one.

Skip any of these, and your entire charging infrastructure might need redesigning in a few years.

Why communal beats individual every time

The version that works is a communal EV charging system taking power from the landlord electrical supply, with the cost of energy passed back to residents via a billing platform, which means:

- → Every resident has equal access.
- → The building's electrical capacity is used intelligently through load balancing.
- → Bills are accurate, by meter, per session.
- → Keeps your involvement to a handful of admin tasks a year.



How EV billing should work in shared parking

A well-designed billing setup is invisible. Residents don't notice it, and neither do you. Here is what's happening underneath.

Why the resident experience matters

Most complaints in shared-parking charging come from the same handful of issues: not knowing what they'll be charged, being charged for someone else's session, the charger not starting, or the bill arriving via a process that looks improvised. Residents who can't predict the cost of charging stop using the building's chargers, and start using public ones instead. That's worse for them, and worse for your standing charges.

Designing the resident experience well isn't a nice-to-have. It's what keeps the building's chargers in use, which is what makes the economics work.

The three roles

Three parties keep the system running:

1. The charger hardware. Meters each session and reports it.
2. The billing platform (often a mobile app), or Charge Point Operator (CPO). Collects payment from residents, handles VAT receipts, and pays the building.
3. The managing agent. Sets the rate, provides bank details, and settles the energy bill with the building's supplier in the normal way.

That's the whole job. Anything that requires you to step in beyond that is friction someone else should have absorbed.

How money should flow

- → Resident plugs in. The app or fob authorises. Session starts.
- → Session ends. The hardware logs kWh delivered via a MID-certified meter.
- → The CPO charges the resident's card automatically at your set rate.
- → Once a month, the CPO pays the building's account.
- → You pay the energy supplier as you always have.

What the managing agent has to do

- → Set the per-kWh rate for residents.
- → Provide bank details to the CPO.
- → Activate new residents when they move in; deactivate them when they leave.

Typical admin: a handful of activations or deactivations per block per year. Tenant churn dictates the pace.

What you should not have to do

- → Issue invoices.
- → Chase payments.
- → Reconcile meter readings.
- → Run a customer service line for charging issues.

If a billing platform asks you to do any of these, it's the wrong platform.

Why OCPP compatibility matters

OCPP (Open Charge Point Protocol) is the open standard that lets a charger talk to any billing platform. Hardware that locks you to a single platform might be cheaper today, but could be a real problem in three years. If the platform raises its fees, drops a feature, or simply goes out of business, OCPP-compliant hardware lets you switch platforms without replacing the chargers.

How billing differs between new-build and retrofit



New-build

A new-build is the cheapest moment in a building's life to install EV charging properly. Decisions made before the slab is poured cost almost nothing; the same decisions made afterwards involve trenches.

The recommended setup:

- → **A dedicated EV feeder pillar**, metered separately from the building's main supply. This isolates EV energy use cleanly for billing and means resident charging never disturbs the building's general billing.
- → **DNO capacity confirmed for the EV feeder at the planning stage**, not retrofitted after handover, where it becomes a months-long negotiation with no leverage.
- → **Charger spec locked in with the developer up front:** commercial-grade, single-cable-ready, OCPP-compliant. This avoids the developer-default install that the managing agent inherits and then has to live with for a decade.

If you're advising on a building that hasn't been built yet, this is the single highest-leverage moment to get involved. The cost of intervening pre-construction is a conversation; post-construction it's a capital project.



Retrofit



The retrofit job is to extract usable EV capacity from the supply that's already in place, and to do so without disrupting residents who haven't bought an EV yet.

→ **Dynamic load balancing.** A controller distributes the building's available capacity across active chargers in real time.

→ **Single-cable install**. Chargers daisy-chain from one feed rather than each pulling a dedicated cable back to the distribution board. This is the difference between a 1-week install and a 4-week install, and between "we can add another charger next year" and "we have to dig up the car park again."

→ **Grid upgrade: sometimes, but less often than feared.** A genuine grid upgrade is needed when you've maxed out the existing supply and demand keepsgrowing. In most retrofit projects, clever design buys enough headroom to put the upgrade off by years, sometimes indefinitely.

The starting question for any retrofit is the same: how much spare capacity does the building have at its peak today, and how can we use it cleverly?



Tariff options that make charging affordable for residents

This is where shared-parking residents have historically been treated worst, and where most of the avoidable resentment in EV billing comes from. It's also where a small amount of upfront attention pays off for the life of the system.



Apartment blocks sit on business tariffs

Energy supplied to a communal landlord meter is, contractually, business electricity. Business tariffs are typically higher than the cheap overnight rates a homeowner with a driveway can access. Most residents don't know this until they get a bill that's noticeably higher than what they would pay on a consumer tariff.

Communal EV tariffs

A handful of suppliers now offer tariffs specifically designed for shared three-phase charging. These pass cheap overnight rates through to flat owners so the economics become comparable to consumer tariffs. The British Gas communal tariff is available exclusively to Zaptec installations, and residents could see charging costs drop by over 50% compared to other tariffs. Shared infrastructure costs for landlords will also fall significantly, from around £400 to £40 per month, making communal charging more financially viable.

Specific terms and eligibility are always worth checking with the supplier directly.

Markup cap

The other half of fair-tariff design is a built-in cap on the rate the managing agent can set above their cost of energy. A well-designed cap:

- → Lets you cover standing charges and the small amount of admin involved.
- → Prevents the resident rate from creeping above what's fair, which is the most common source of disputes.
- → Protects the building's reputation when units come up for resale or rental.

When choosing a billing platform, ask whether a markup cap is enforced by the platform or whether it's left to the managing agent's discretion. The former saves you arguments.

The resident experience

The simplest test of a billing system is what it looks like to the person plugging in. If the resident experience is good, residents use the chargers, complain less, and treat them as part of the building. If it isn't, they'll find a public charger and complain about your service charge.

Onboarding

1. The managing agent, or the Charge Point Operator (CPO), sends an email invite to a new resident.

2. The resident downloads the CPO's app and pairs either their vehicle or a specific charger.

3. They add a payment card. Done.

The whole process should take a few minutes. If it requires a phone call to the managing agent, something is wrong upstream.

Starting a charge

Three common methods, in roughly the order of preference:

- → **Proximity detection.** The app recognises the resident's vehicle is at their charger and starts the session.
- → **QR code scan.** The resident scans a code on the charger and the app initiates the session.
- → **RFID fob.** A physical card or fob tapped on the charger. Useful as a backup when a phone is flat or the resident is a guest.

Cost transparency

Before the session starts, the resident should see: the current per-kWh rate, an estimated time-to-full where the vehicle supports it, and any standing or session charges. After the session ends: kWh delivered, total cost, and a downloadable VAT receipt. Without these, you will get disputes.



Common friction points: and how to design around them

The charger doesn't start

Mitigated by hardware with built-in self-tests before each session, and remote diagnostics so the CPO fixes it over-the-air, through an online platform, rather than calling out a technician.

Two residents thought they were charged for the same session.

Mitigated by MID-certified per-session metering, which produces a legally robust log that resolves disputes definitively.

A resident moves out and is still being charged.

Mitigated by CPO-managed account activation, not a manual list maintained by the managing agent.

What to look for in a billing solution

The simplest test of a billing system is what it looks like to the person plugging in. If the resident experience is good, residents use the chargers, complain less, and treat them as part of the building. If it isn't, they'll find a public charger and complain about your service charge.

1 Accurate, legally compliant metering

- → **MID-certified, not just MID-calibrated.** MID (the Measuring Instruments Directive, sometimes called MIR in the UK) certification means the meter has been independently approved for billing use. Calibration is not the same thing and won't satisfy the regulations coming into force for billable EV charging in the UK.
- → **Built into the charger, not bolted on externally.** External metering is another component to fail and another supplier to call when it does.

2 Hands-off management

- → Automated payment collection from residents, with monthly payout to the managing agent.
- → Remote visibility and diagnostics, so faults are caught and fixed without a site visit.
- → OCPP compliance, so the hardware is not locked to one billing platform; the platform decision should stay reversible.

3 Total cost of ownership

The headline price is rarely the whole price. Add up:

- → **Hardware cost.** One-off.
- → **Software / platform fees**. Some platforms charge per socket per month; others are free to the managing agent. Over 5 years, this is usually the largest variable cost.
- → **Warranty.** Five years, parts and labour, is a reasonable benchmark. Anything less means you're carrying the failure risk yourself.
- → **Maintenance.** The number of site visits per year, which depends almost entirely on the quality of the remote diagnostics. A platform that lets the CPO fix most issues from a laptop is, over a decade, a different financial proposition from one that doesn't.

A 5-year view of these numbers tells you the real cost. The brochure number on its own does not.


Zaptec

How Zaptec approaches EV billing for managing agents

Our hardware, billing partnerships, and remote management are built around a single principle: the system should run itself, so the managing agent doesn't need to worry about it.

For managing agents specifically, this looks like:

MID-B certified metering, built into the charger.

Legally compliant billing without an external meter or a third-party device. Per-session, per-resident logs are auditable, and dispute-proof.

We work with CPOs who put their customers first.

That means free to the managing agent and no per-socket monthly subscription. Residents pay, your CPO pays you monthly, you settle the energy bill as you always have. Our chargers are OCPP-compliant, so you can use your CPO of choice. For apartment installations, we recommend Tap Electric.

Zaptec Portal for real-time visibility and remote diagnostics.

Faults are typically resolved remotely; most issues are fixed without a site visit at all. This is the single biggest reason ongoing maintenance cost stays low over the life of the system.

Single-cable install and patented phase rotation.

Retrofit into existing buildings is often possible without a grid upgrade. New chargers can be added later on the same feed, so the building grows into the system rather than starting again every couple of years.

British Gas communal tariff.

Available exclusively to Zaptec customers, with cheap overnight rates passed through to residents and a markup cap built in to protect them from runaway pricing.

Five-year parts-and-labour guarantee

Industry-leading uptime across hundreds of thousands of charge sessions to date.



If you’re thinking about adding EV charging to a block, or living with a setup that already isn’t working as it should, we’re happy to walk through what a working version would look like for your specific building.