

# Join the electric vehicle stampede

More than 50 Waiheke families, businesses and individuals have had the chance to trial an electric vehicle (EV) in a bid to introduce even more to the island.

“The ‘try out an EV campaign’ is only halfway through,” says Electric Island Waiheke member Eric Pilling.

Four vehicles were loaned to Electric Island Waiheke by Auckland specialist dealer, GVI Electric. The vehicles include two Nissan Leafs and two Nissan eNV200 vans, one of which is set up as a seven-seater coach.

“Reactions to the trial have been very positive, with tradies and businesses of all types, queuing to trial the van,” says Pilling.

“The seven-seater coach has been popular with taxi and rental companies, schools and several of the island’s trusts.

“The cars have been trialled by individuals, families and businesses too. People have said after their trial that they had no idea how well EVs performed and how low cost they were to operate.”

Eric says several of the people who trialled an EV actually set out to purchase one straight away, while others say they will wait a few years before investigating the options.

While the clean, green, eco-friendly image of EVs appeals to many, questionable mining practices for the minerals needed to develop EV batteries, often involving young children, are regularly raised.

“I was lucky enough to be at the world’s foremost EV conference in Oslo, Norway earlier this year where the keynote speaker was Kumi Naidoo, the Secretary-General of Amnesty International, and



Above, Electric Island Waiheke is now taking bookings for EV trials in November. Right, Eric Pilling says electric vehicle trials on the island have been hugely successful.



a noted South African human rights activist,” says Vern Whitehead, founder of Electric Island Waiheke.

“Kumi’s message was crystal clear. Child labour has to stop. EV manufacturers have taken notice and the message for everyone is ‘ethical mining is ok - but child labour is not.’

“It’s like cell phones all over again, and the uptake curve on EVs is almost identical to cell phones.”

Vern says the uptake of EVs on Waiheke has been phenomenal since Electric Island launched last November with the ambition of having all vehicles and equipment on the island running on clean, electric energy by 2030.

According to the New Zealand Transport Agency, there are currently 101 registered electric vehicles on Waiheke, although Vern believes this number is likely to be higher as some are registered off-island.

“Our own Nissan Leaf, for instance, is

registered off-island as part of our company fleet.

“I believe the actual number of EVs based on Waiheke is well over 100.”

Earlier this month, in conjunction with Electric Island, Vector announced the installation of 80 electric vehicle smart chargers in homes across the island, along with 10 public EV chargers and one mobile charger.

The process around determining charging locations and access is being led and facilitated by the Electric Island Waiheke Trust, which is formally endorsed by the Waiheke Local Board. The group is currently running a scoping process and Vern met with Vector on Wednesday to discuss the selection process around the residential and public charging sites on Waiheke.

There are several options available for the mobile charger, including a roadside assistance-type service, and a portable charger on wheels that could be used without an allocated parking space. These technologies are available overseas, but this would be the first implementation in New Zealand according to Vector.

“We anticipate that installation of the first residential charger will occur before the end of the year, with the others consecutively rolled out in 2020,” says Vector communications specialist Rachel Reynolds.

Electric Island Waiheke is now taking bookings for EV trials in November. Email [ericpilling@gmail.com](mailto:ericpilling@gmail.com) to register your interest. •

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