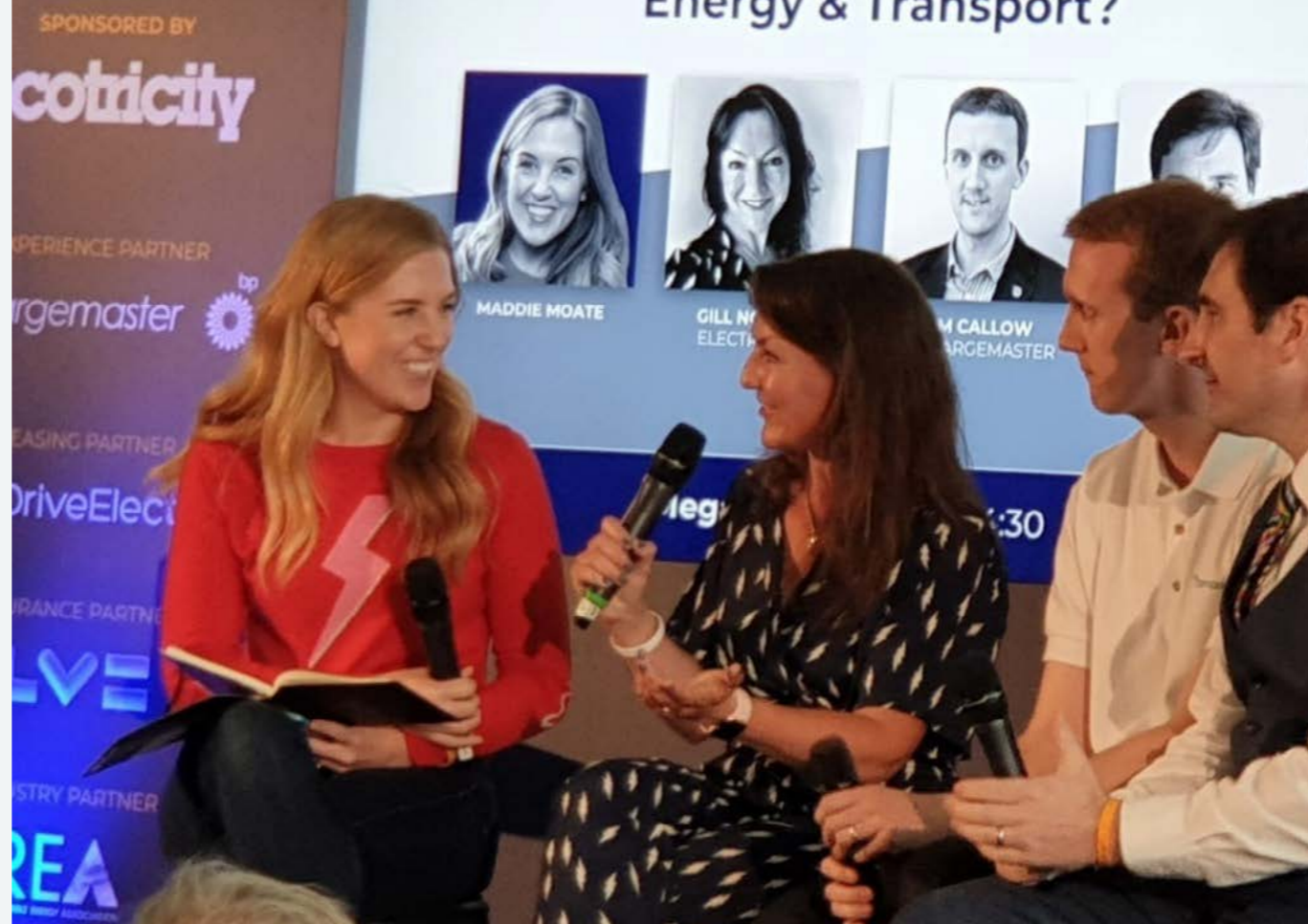


Gill Nowell

Distribution System Operator (DSO)
Lead at ElectraLink



BC: To celebrate International Women's Day we've interviewed data-driven innovation expert at ElectraLink and Director of Electric Vehicle Association (EVA) England, Gill Nowell. Selected as one of the Women's Engineering Society (WES) Top 50 Women in Engineering in 2020, she's a regular speaker and panelist on electric vehicles and data-driven transition to net zero.

BC: How did you get interested in the industry?

GN: My passion for electric vehicles first manifested itself after driving one of the early Nissan Leafs back in 2012, as part of the My Electric Avenue project. I'd always been a driving enthusiast, but this was like no other car I'd ever driven before. It is by no coincidence then that I've forged a career for myself within the electric vehicle and wider energy sector.

GN: Along the way during the past 25 years, I've worked across sustainable energy, utility, and environmental technologies sectors, including spending several years on electric vehicle-grid integration projects at EA Technology (My Electric Avenue, Smart EV, Electric Nation).

GN: More recently my focus has been on engaging with energy industry stakeholders to uncover opportunities to innovate with the wealth of data at ElectraLink, the UK's energy market data hub.

BC: What project have you led which you are most proud of?

GN: The My Electric Avenue project (2012 – 2015) has definitely been a highlight of my career to date. I was instrumental in securing funding for the project and was responsible for managing customer engagement into the UK's first mass electric vehicle trials to understand the impact of clusters of EVs charging on local electricity network, and to learn how drivers would accept having their charging managed. It was also the first project to trial an early smart charging technology – it was exciting stuff!

GN: A key piece of learning from the project was that there needed to be communication and shared experience between the automotive and energy sectors. This led to the formation of the EV Network Group, which in turn led to the creation of the Government backed EV Energy Taskforce. I am immensely proud of having had even a small hand in that.

GN: On a personal note, I am proud to have founded EVclicks in February 2019, an online resource library of EV images, all available to download for free by communities, small business, trade bodies, schools, to aid the transition to zero tailpipe emission transport.

GN: There are almost 4,000 EV and EV charging photos in the galleries, donated from across the globe.

BC: What areas are you looking forward to push forward and champion in 2021?

GN: In light of the Government's commitment to a Green Industrial Revolution, it's an exciting time to be part of the electric vehicle sector. Being part of project Skyline that is being delivered by ElectraLink in partnership with CrowdCharge for Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks and UK Power Networks, I'll be working in 2021 to increase the visibility of new electric vehicles and new charge points to increase visibility of the additional EV demand on the local energy networks – to support more cost effective and timely network planning.

GN: At the start of 2021 ElectraLink completed the minimal viable product for Flexr – the electricity network data standardisation and provision service. It's going to be exciting to see how this progresses and lead to an accelerated flexibility and innovation in support of the energy transition towards net zero in the coming years.

GN: In a volunteer capacity, I was proud to co-found EVA England through lockdown in 2020. We established EVA England to offer a voice, services and representation to current and prospective electric vehicle drivers in England, inspired by the benefits of electric driving and concerned by the health and climate impacts of the use of petrol and diesel cars and vans.

GN: We launched the new website in February, and a survey to EV drivers on the Government Consultation on the consumer experience of public charging; and we are launching to members, which is a huge milestone for us. I'm excited to see EVA England continue to go from strength to strength through 2021 and beyond.

BC: What would you say to other women who are interested in the industry or who have been treated differently, or those how have been discredited in achieving their goals?

GN: I have experienced negativity from line managers in my career. It can be difficult to 'fit' in a very technical environment, with a background in law. However, any negative experiences have been far outweighed by the foresight of other very supportive managers, who understand that a technical degree is not necessarily a prerequisite to develop and deliver a brilliant engineering project. It takes more than academic qualifications in the traditional STEM subjects to manage people and lead large-scale projects, as my career is testament to.

GN: For me, it's been about finding a passion, talking with people, networking, understanding what makes people and organisations tick, and constantly building on what you're good at – bringing people and projects together to achieve beyond expectations. It takes all sorts to make a project go round, not least an engineering or data-driven one.