

# Briefing

## How your local authority can take action to end diesel and cut air pollution

### Introduction

**Health:** Outdoor air pollution is responsible for 40,000 premature deaths a year in the UK (more than alcohol or obesity), according to the Royal College of Physicians (RCP) and Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (<https://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/projects/outputs/every-breath-we-take-lifelong-impact-air-pollution>).

**Traffic and diesels:** Air pollution is a combustion issue, with road traffic the biggest problem, and diesels worst of all. The most recent “Euro 6 diesel cars emit more than five times as much NO<sub>x</sub> as Euro 6 petrol cars” (<http://policyexchange.org.uk/publication/up-in-the-air-how-to-solve-londons-air-quality-crisis-part-2/>)

**Scope of the problem:** Air pollution is a problem right across the country.

Nitrogen Dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>): the government’s latest Air Quality Plan for reducing this air pollutant (of December 2015) shows that of the UK’s 43 Air Quality Zones, only 5, and possibly a 6<sup>th</sup> met EU legal limits by 2015, which was the last possible date for compliance (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/air-quality-in-the-uk-plan-to-reduce-nitrogen-dioxide-emissions>, Table 3 on pages 11 and 12).

The Chair of Parliament’s Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, Neil Parish MP, has established that 169 Local Authorities (about 4 out of 10) exceeded the EU’s NO<sub>2</sub> annual mean legal limit in 2015 (<https://www.theyworkforyou.com/wrans/?id=2016-10-11.47949.h&s=speaker%3A24779#g47949.q0>).

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For more than 40 years we’ve seen that the wellbeing of people and planet go hand in hand – and it’s been the inspiration for our campaigns. Together with thousands of people like you we’ve secured safer food and water, defended wildlife and natural habitats, championed the move to clean energy and acted to keep our climate stable. Be a Friend of the Earth – see things differently.

## How your local authority can take action to end diesel and cut air pollution



Particulate Matter (PM): the UK is considered to have met EU legal limits for PM10s (required by 2005 or 2011 with an extension), and new limits for the smaller and more dangerous PM2.5s are just coming in. However many places are failing the World Health Organisation standards, which are twice as stringent as the EUs for this pollutant. Their global database shows that of places on their list 10 UK cities and towns (plus Gibraltar) are over their recommended level for PM<sub>10</sub>, and 40 UK urban areas (plus Gibraltar) are over their recommended level for PM<sub>2.5</sub> ([http://www.who.int/phe/health\\_topics/outdoorair/databases/cities/en/](http://www.who.int/phe/health_topics/outdoorair/databases/cities/en/)).

### Action needed

Action is needed at all levels of government – at the EU level, nationally, regionally and locally.

It is important that Local Authorities (LAs) use their existing powers to the full, to accelerate the move towards clean vehicles, and particularly to phase out the use of diesel - as well as to cut traffic levels and offer alternatives to driving. This is necessary so that air pollution is cut and the early death toll and further ill health from our current deadly and illegal levels are reduced.

The Government says: “Local authorities can take action as and when necessary to improve air quality and we encourage them to do so.”  
[http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmenvfru/665/66504.htm#\\_idT\\_extAnchor006](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmenvfru/665/66504.htm#_idT_extAnchor006)

However there are things on which Local Authorities need to lobby Government and others - including calling for bolder action and more local powers and resources.

#### A. Local authority action:

##### 1. Cleaner vehicles

There needs to be an urgent transformation of vehicles on our roads away from the most polluting, particularly diesel – the most recent diesel cars produce 5 times as much NOx emissions as petrol ones – and towards clean ones.

###### a. Own fleet procurement:

LAs should ban the purchase of diesel vehicles for their own business and fleet at the earliest opportunity.

Camden council and the City of London have already moved to do so:

<http://news.cityoflondon.gov.uk/city-of-london-corporation-bans-diesel-vehicle-purchases/>

City of London: <http://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/city-of-london-to-stop-buying-diesel-vehicles-in-boost-for-pollution-battle-a3307421.html>

Did you know? Being inside a car or other vehicle can expose you to high levels of air pollution – in fact higher than those walking or cycling the same roads. High levels of exposure can make people ill, potentially causing people to take time off work (<http://www.healthyair.org.uk/healthiest-transport-option-video/>).

**b. Parking charges:**

These can differentiate by type of vehicle and how polluting they are.

For instance the London Borough of Islington has a £96 annual diesel surcharge on residents permits <https://www.islington.gov.uk/parking/parking-permits/diesel-surcharges>, and Milton Keynes provides free parking in the city centre for wholly electric or plug in hybrids: <https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/streets-transport-and-parking/parking/electric-vehicle-charge-points>

**c. Clean Air Zones/CAZ:**

- (i) For the 5 LAs beyond London for which the Government plan a CAZ to bring forward NO<sub>2</sub> compliance with legal limits from 2025 to 2020:  
The current CAZ plans should be strengthened so that all include not only LGVs but also cars, and also stronger measures for diesels.
- (ii) For the other city and large town LAs beyond London, for which the Government do not plan a CAZ (as they expect NO<sub>2</sub> compliance with legal limits by 2020 anyway):  
A CAZ should be pursued, in order to bring forward compliance from 2020.

Manchester are investigating such a scheme:

<http://www.airqualitynews.com/2016/03/04/manchester-air-quality-and-emissions-strategy-launched/>

The Government says “Cities already have the required powers to introduce and charge for entry into a Clean Air Zone [under the Transport Act 2000] as well as other air quality schemes.”

[http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmenvfru/665/66504.htm#\\_idTextAnchor006](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmenvfru/665/66504.htm#_idTextAnchor006)

**2. Traffic reduction:**

The numbers of vehicles on our roads cause problems, including particle air pollution from tyre and brake wear. Traffic levels must also be cut to bring air pollution within legal limits in the shortest time possible. Traffic generating developments which would add to the problem must also be avoided. Fewer vehicles will also overall reduce congestion, which is good for business, and help create healthy communities and places which are attractive to live in, work in, and visit.

**a. Road traffic reduction targets:**

Set out a target to cut traffic levels in the LA area, so that this can help drive other policies and decision-making in the right direction. Oslo plans to “...reduce automobile traffic by 20% in 2019 and 30% in 2030” (<http://www.autocar.co.uk/car-news/green-cars/dutch-government-wants-ban-petrol-and-diesel-cars>).

**b. Planning to reduce the need to travel:**

Design communities so that key amenities and work opportunities are within easy walking and cycling distance as much as possible. This will take pressure off public transport as well as the road network. In Freiburg, Germany “around 70% of people now live within 500metres of a tram stop” (<http://www.ecotippingpoints.org/our-stories/indepth/germany-freiburg-sustainability-transportation-energy-green-economy.html>).

**c. Active travel:**

Invest more in making walking and cycling easier and safer, to draw out some of the latent demand, which can also improve health through exercise.

**d. 20mph Zones:**

Carefully-planned 20mph zones can help cut air pollution as they can help make walking and cycling more attractive and safer. The City of London found that “NO<sub>x</sub> emission factors are higher for petrol vehicles over 20mph drive cycles compared to 30mph drive cycles; for diesel vehicles they are lower” and “given the higher contribution of diesel vehicles to emissions of NO<sub>x</sub>, this is a significant result”, and that “PM<sub>10</sub> emission factors are lower for both petrol and diesel vehicles over 20mph drive cycles compared to 30mph drive cycles; the exception is vehicles with engines over 2.0 litres in size” (<https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/business/environmental-health/environmental-protection/air-quality/Documents/speed-restriction-air-quality-report-2013-for-web.pdf>).

**e. Public Transport:**

Invest more in public transport for longer journeys – including its affordability, improvements to make it more reliable, and in new infrastructure as needed.

**d. Car clubs:**

Encouragement of car clubs can help cut traffic levels as, while vehicles are available when needed, people tend to use them less.

**e. Road user charging or Congestion Charging:**

Existing powers allow charging vehicles within a designated area, which can help cut traffic and congestion and pollution.

As well as the London scheme, Durham have introduced one:

<http://www.durham.gov.uk/article/3437/Durham-Road-User-Charge-Zone-congestion-charge>

**f. Workplace parking:**

Charges can encourage employers to reduce the numbers of workplace parking places they provide.

Nottingham have introduced such a scheme:

<http://www.cbttthoughtleadership.org.uk/WPL-Briefing-Nottingham.pdf>

**g. Reducing road space and Pedestrianisation:**

Both pro-actively and to lock in the benefits of measures to reduce traffic levels, road space should be re-allocated away from vehicles and towards walking and cycling and public transport. This can then produce a virtuous circle, encouraging further use of these modes.

With permission as necessary, roads can be closed and 'quietways' developed.

With viable alternatives for people in place, when road space for general traffic is reduced, not all traffic is displaced, and some evaporates as people make cleaner journeys.

**h. Traffic generating schemes:**

Developments such as those with large car parks and new road building which would generate new traffic and add to the air pollution problem must be avoided. Adding more road space generates new induced traffic (<http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/roads-nowhere/induced-traffic>), which would overall add to congestion in the area (even though the pattern of congestion could change), and worsen air pollution.

**3. Other measures:**

**a. Planning to avoid exposure and retrofitting buildings:**

"New schools, hospitals and care homes must not be built next to air pollution hotspots" according to Parliament's Environmental Audit Committee when they investigated air pollution (<http://www.parliament.uk/report-air-quality>). Users of such buildings are most vulnerable to the impacts of air pollution, and they must not be sited where air pollution exceeds legal levels.

The Committee went on to say that "Existing schools next to busy roads should also be fitted with air filtration systems". Air pollution disproportionately impacts on children whose developing lungs are particularly vulnerable. Government must provide support to schools to introduce indoor air filtration when required.

**b. Anti-idling:**

Measures to reduce unnecessary idling can help cut air pollution, and can help drivers understand the impact vehicle use has.

Did you know? LAs in England have powers to issue £20 fixed penalty tickets to drivers who idle their cars unnecessarily ([http://www.uklaws.org/statutory/instruments\\_28/doc28315.htm](http://www.uklaws.org/statutory/instruments_28/doc28315.htm)), and several LA's in London are taking action on this (<http://idlingaction.london/>).

**c. Health and Wellbeing Boards:**

There is considerable scope to advance action on air pollution through the Public Health Outcomes Framework. There is the air pollution indicator itself which should be adopted: "3.01- Fraction of mortality attributable to particulate air pollution" <http://www.phoutcomes.info/public-health-outcomes-framework#page/3/gid/1000043/pat/6/par/E12000004/ati/102/are/E06000015/iid/30101/age/230/sex/4>, but also there are others such as those on active travel which would help take things in the right direction.

**d. Air Quality Management Area/AQMA Action Plan:**

Strengthening an AQMA action plan can help clarify priorities and direct investment in the right direction.

**e. Natural green assets:**

Action to preserve and enhance the natural green assets of the LA will help to lessen the impact of air pollution on people by providing buffers, and places to spend time where air pollution is less bad.

**B. Lobby others:**

To enable further action there is a need to lobby the Government – both for bolder action from the government itself, and to enable Local Authorities to do more themselves.

There are also things on which some LAs will need to lobby others who hold devolved power, such as for those in London, the London Mayor.

**1. Diesels / combustion engine vehicles for sale:**

As part of the process of phasing out the use of diesel, diesels will need to stop being available for sale in the UK. The Netherlands and Norway plan such a ban for diesels and petrol cars from 2025 (<http://www.autocar.co.uk/car-news/green-cars/norway-considers-ban-petrol-and-diesel-cars-2025>).

**2. A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Clean Air Act:**

LA support is needed to get a new Clean Air Act. This is needed to set out legal requirements on air following Brexit, key measures the government needs to pursue, and it should contain measures to enable LAs to do more on air pollution.

### 3. Road tax / Vehicle Excise Duty:

There needs to be a reversal of past incentives towards diesel, and diesel must now be disincentivised.

### 4. Scrappage scheme:

The government must develop a national scrappage scheme, starting with getting rid of the dirtiest diesels. Many diesels were bought in good faith and people need support to move away from diesel. This scheme should be developed with motor manufacturers who should fund at least part of the scheme, and be carefully-designed, and must avoid displacement of dirty diesels elsewhere.

The scheme must be progressive in that it must move people not just from diesels to other fossil fuel-burning vehicles, but to clean vehicles and also to alternatives to driving. Car club membership, rail season tickets for instance could be suitable alternatives.

### 5. Clean Air Zones/CAZ:

- a. For London LAs: These should lobby the Mayor and TfL to improve the LEZ and proposed ULEZ. The ULEZ needs to be London-wide to include cars and combined with smart road user charging (RUC). They should also lobby the Mayor and TfL to lobby the government for bolder action.
- b. For the 5 LAs beyond London for which the Government plan a CAZ to bring forward NO<sub>2</sub> compliance with legal limits from 2025 to 2020: These may need to lobby for further funds to enable strengthened CAZs which should all include not only LGVs but also cars.
- c. For the other city and large town LAs beyond London, for which the Government do not plan a CAZ (as they expect NO<sub>2</sub> compliance with legal limits by 2020 anyway): These should lobby government for funds to enable CAZs to be pursued, in order to bring forward compliance from 2020.

### 6. Powers to ban the dirtiest vehicles:

As well as currently being able to charge the dirtiest vehicles, LAs need to be able to ban them from certain places as necessary, to help get rid of diesel.

### 7. Powers for emergency traffic restrictions:

When there is an episode of bad air pollution, the first action needs to be to restrict the polluting vehicles, before having to restrict people's behaviour.

The RCP report says: "**Act to protect the public health when air pollution levels are high.** When these limits are exceeded, local authorities *must* have the power to close or divert roads to reduce the volume of traffic, especially near schools."

<https://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/projects/outputs/every-breath-we-take-lifelong-impact-air-pollution>.