

Breathing Cities: 2-pager Campaign Briefing

Background

- Breathing Cities is the Green Party's national clean air campaign.
- As of March 2018, 11 towns and cities, representing 14 local parties, have joined the campaign: London, Leeds, Sheffield, Oxford, Bristol, Reading, Bradford, Portsmouth, Northampton, Brentwood and Chelmsford. Other cities are welcome!

The issue

Air pollution is harming our health

- Air pollution contributes to an estimated 40,000 premature deaths every year in the UK.
- Air pollution makes respiratory conditions like asthma worse, and is linked to stunted lung growth in children¹, heart attacks, strokes² and cancer³.
- Air pollution in the UK costs more than £20 billion per year to our health services and businesses⁴

Our transport system is at the heart of the problem

- Road transport is responsible for on average 80% of air pollution where legal limits are being broken⁵.
- Diesel vehicles are responsible for 90% of nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions where legal limits are being broken (cars 35%, vans 22%, HGVs 18%, buses 16% and taxis 2%)⁶.
- Transport emits about a quarter of the UK's total greenhouse gas emissions, and is the highest emitting sector⁷.
- Air pollution inside cars is 9 to 12 times higher than outside: walking and cycling exposes us to less air pollution than driving⁸.
- Tackling congestion and air pollution helps fight climate change in a way that is relevant to people in their everyday lives. Relevant campaigns include support for sustainable transport, targeted diesel schemes, and electric vehicle infrastructure.

Air pollution hits the most vulnerable the hardest

- In 2010, a quarter of primary schools in London were in areas with average NO2 concentrations exceeding EU limits. Of these, 82% were in deprived areas⁹.
- Areas with the most heavy traffic are often those used by the most disadvantaged people to live, work and shop.
- Air pollution most strongly impacts the health and wellbeing of older people, disabled people, and children.

¹ <http://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa040610>

²

<https://www.bhf.org.uk/news-from-the-bhf/news-archive/2017/april/bhf-responds-to-new-research-that-reveals-how-air-pollution-causes-heart-attacks-and-strokes>

³ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-24564446>

⁴ <https://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/projects/outputs/every-breath-we-take-lifelong-impact-air-pollution>

⁵ <https://www.healthyair.org.uk/4672-2/>

⁶ <https://www.healthyair.org.uk/4672-2/>

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/final-uk-greenhouse-gas-emissions-national-statistics-1990-2016>

⁸ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/jun/12/children-risk-air-pollution-cars-former-uk-chief-scientist-warns>

⁹ <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmenvfru/433/433.pdf> (paragraph 8)

Government is failing to address air pollution

- Government has been taken to court 3 times in the last 3 years because their clean air strategy is so weak it's illegal¹⁰. These failed legal battles have cost taxpayers £500,000¹¹.
- The 37 out of 43 zones across the UK that were breaching legal nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) air pollution limits in 2015 are still being illegally polluted today.¹²
- 76 local authorities in the UK are forecast to breach legal limits of air pollution until at least the end of 2018¹³.
- 65% of British public support a new Clean Air Act¹⁴.
- Jenny Jones is working on a Clean Air Bill in Parliament which establishes clean air as a human right¹⁵.

What we are calling for

Headline call: Let's make our cities clean, healthy, and safe: cities we can breathe in.

Top lines:

- We will reverse the air pollution crisis harming our cities and reduce the impact of cities on climate change.
- We will invest in a public transport revolution that will make using a bus, tram, or train the most convenient choice for everyone.
- We will reclaim our city streets for people, making walking and cycling convenient, safe, and enjoyable and ending the domination of the car.
- We will inspire people to create cities that they feel healthy in, with streets where they enjoy spending time.

National calls to Government:

1. Publish new Clean Air Act fit for the 21st Century (petition: <https://action.greenparty.org.uk/clean-air>)
2. Spend at least £30 per person annually on walking and cycling.
3. Bring forward the phase out of petrol and diesel car sales to 2030 at the latest.
4. Implement an expanded national network of Clean Air Zones by the end of 2018.
5. Create and fund a targeted diesel scrappage scheme which swaps dirty cars for public transport and cycling tokens and other green alternatives.
6. Increase the Vehicle Excise Duty for new diesel cars.

Local calls to local councils:

1. Make walking, cycling, and public transport the main forms of urban transport.
2. Make public transport cleaner, more affordable, more accessible, and more joined up.
3. Reduce the need for private car usage and the air pollution it causes.
4. Improve people's health by creating more opportunities for physical activity in everyday journeys, such as walking and cycling.
5. Make streets safe and friendly places where people choose to spend time.

This is a summarised briefing. See the detailed version here: <https://www.greenparty.org.uk/breathing-cities.html>

¹⁰ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/feb/21/high-court-rules-uk-air-pollution-plans-unlawful>

¹¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/apr/05/air-pollution-uk-governments-failed-legal-battles-cost-taxpayers-500m>

¹² <https://www.clientearth.org/new-uk-air-pollution-figures-reveal-shocking-lack-progress/>

¹³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/air-quality-plan-for-nitrogen-dioxide-no2-in-uk-2017>

¹⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2017/feb/14/65-percent-british-public-want-clean-air-act-pollution-harmful-uk-survey>

¹⁵ <https://cleanair.london/legal/clean-air-is-a-human-right/>