

1 May 2009

‘Every Breath You Take’: an investigation into air quality by the London Assembly’s Environment Committee

‘Clean Air in London’ congratulates the London Assembly’s Environment Committee for succeeding where Mayor Johnson and the government have failed so far by: unearthing the real health cost of poor air quality; and producing a convincing plan to improve quickly air quality in London

The London Assembly’s Environment Committee (LAEC) has published today a report on its investigation into air quality in London titled ‘Every Breath You Take’. The LAEC’s media release and report (attached) can be seen at:

Media release: http://www.london.gov.uk/view_press_release_a.jsp?releaseid=21899

Report: <http://www.london.gov.uk/who-runs-london/the-london-assembly/publications/environment/every-breath-you-take-investigation-air-quality-london>

Quotes:

Simon Birkett, Principal Contact for the Campaign for Clean Air in London (CCAL), said:

‘The London Assembly’s cross-party Environment Committee has succeeded (in weeks) where Mayor Johnson and the government have failed so far (over one year and 10 years respectively) by: unearthing the real health cost of poor air quality; and producing a convincing plan to improve quickly air quality in London.

‘The Campaign for Clean Air in London supports fully the report published today including all its recommendations.

‘CCAL wishes to thank particularly: Darren Johnson (Green), Chair of the London Assembly’s Environment Committee; Murad Qureshi (Labour), Deputy Chair; Gareth Bacon (Conservative); and Mike Tuffrey (Liberal Democrat) who have worked so hard and effectively throughout this investigation. As the ‘party leads’ on this investigation, they have each risen above party-politics to champion the true interests of Londoners. CCAL congratulates them all and thanks most warmly also the other members of the LAEC: James Cleverly (Conservative); Roger Evans (Conservative); and Nicky Gavron (Labour). Elizabeth Williams, Scrutiny Manager, and her colleagues in the Greater London Authority are to be commended also for their valuable contribution.

‘CCAL calls on Mayor Johnson to accept immediately the report including all its recommendations and the government, after some 10 years of static or worsening air pollution in London, to fund fully the main measures proposed. With thousands of lives seemingly lost prematurely every year in London, action must begin now not wait for 12 months to 18 months while the Mayor and the government dilly-dally over their air quality strategies and plans.

‘To encourage such action, CCAL will be writing to the European Commission shortly urging it to escalate its legal action against the United Kingdom by issuing a final written warning for breaching

standards designed to protect the public from dangerous airborne particles. Put in legislation in 1999, these laws have been broken every year since they entered into force in 2005.'

Contact:

Campaign for Clean Air in London

Simon Birkett, Principal Contact, can be contacted through the Campaign website or the email or mobile phone number provided separately.

Notes:

1. The main recommendations from the LAEC are:
 - i. Introduce additional, smaller low emission zones to target pollution hotspots from road transport.
 - ii. Introduce a vehicle retrofit subsidy scheme in London with funding support from central government.
 - iii. Undertake research into using biofuel for all public transport in London including buses, trains, taxis and river transport.
 - iv. Launch a widespread information campaign to make air quality information more accessible to Londoners.
 - v. The reduction of emissions in the older public diesel vehicle fleet is vital.
 - vi. Planning guidance can be used through existing legislation if there are air quality implications for planning decisions.

2. The LAEC's media release and report (attached), 'Every Breath You Take', can be seen at:

Media release: http://www.london.gov.uk/view_press_release_a.jsp?releaseid=21899

Report: <http://www.london.gov.uk/assembly/reports/environment.jsp>

3. The Campaign for Clean Air in London submitted 65 detailed recommendations to the London Assembly Environment Committee for it (and others) to consider as part of its investigation. These are attached to this Campaign Update.

4. The Campaign for Clean Air in London (CCAL) wrote to Alan Johnson, the Secretary of State for Health, in a letter dated 19 April pointing out that the latest research by the European Environment Agency suggests some 2,900 people aged 30 or over may die prematurely per annum from dangerous airborne particles (PM₁₀) in Greater London alone: nearly three times earlier estimates. The letter pointed out also that related research suggests the amount of time lost, per statistical victim, may be 9.8 years equating to an average change in life expectancy of approximately 0.6 years (i.e. 7.2 months) in the total population. CCAL's letter can be seen at:

<http://cleanairinlondon.org/health/what-is-the-real-health-impact-of-poor-air-quality-in-greater-london/>