

19 July 2012

‘Clean Air in London’ congratulates Policy Exchange on its report ‘Something in the Air’

The blockbuster report shows: over 85% of the areas with England’s worst air pollution are in London; diesel exhaust is at the heart of air pollution problems in cities; the vulnerable are much more likely to be exposed to air pollution than others; and key policy actions needed

‘Clean Air in London’ calls on the Mayor of London and the Government to act on the biggest public health risk after smoking, not least when London may face a summer smog in the days up to and during the Olympics

Policy Exchange (PX) has published a report titled ‘Something in the Air: The forgotten crisis of Britain’s poor air quality’. The report, authored by Simon Moore, Research Fellow, and edited by Guy Newey, Head of Environment and Energy, can be seen at:

<http://www.policyexchange.org.uk/publications/category/item/something-in-the-air-the-forgotten-crisis-of-britain-s-poor-air-quality>

Key findings of the report include:

- i. in England, London has 86% of the worst areas for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and 87% of the worst areas for dangerous airborne particles;
- ii. diesel vehicles were responsible for 91% of fine particles (PM_{2.5}) and 95% of NO₂ exhaust emissions in London in 2009;
- iii. more than 320,000 children (including more than 180,000 under the age of 11) in London attend 1,098 schools within 150 metres of roads carrying more than 10,000 vehicles per day on average;
- iv. in the worst 10% of London for PM₁₀, 5-10 year old children are 41% more likely than the London average to be eligible for free school meals and residents are 27% more likely than the London average to be on income support;
- v. in the worst 10% of London for NO₂, 5-10 year old children are 47% more likely than the London average to be eligible for free school meals and residents are 26% more likely than the London average to be on income support; and
- vi. the Government has spent nothing on public information campaigns for air pollution.

Simon Birkett, Founder and Director of Clean Air in London, said:

“Clean Air in London congratulates Policy Exchange (PX) on its ground breaking report which shows diesel exhaust at the heart of London’s air pollution problems and social and economic inequalities. It has been a pleasure assisting PX with various aspects of this report.

“The report shows the urgent need to combine better public understanding of the forgotten crisis of Britain’s poor air quality with policies that target technology and behavioural change measures and stop encouraging perverse incentives for polluting technologies.

“It defies belief that Defra is still investigating: solutions to the UK’s nitrogen dioxide problems three and a half years after starting to do so; and inner low emission zones such as that operating in Berlin since 2010 which has reduced PM₁₀ and NO₂ concentrations by 5-10%. As serious, Defra has

admitted lobbying to weaken these public health laws. It is also astonishing that the Government has spent nothing on public information campaigns for air pollution.

“The Mayor’s is rightly commended for his ‘London Plan’ but he must:

- stop incentivising the use of diesel cars, heed criticism of the use of pollution suppressants and keep his promise to mitigate fully the impacts on air pollution of removing the western extension of the congestion charging zone; and
- accelerate the roll-out of abatement technology for London buses (specifically SCRT which Transport for London has told PX has delivered around 70% reductions in emissions of oxides of nitrogen), support owners in reducing harmful emissions from the London taxi fleet and ensure a positive road transport legacy from the Olympics.

“The Mayor of London and Government must act on the biggest public health risk after smoking, not least when London may face a summer smog in the days up to and during the Olympics.”

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