

3 May 2016

352 reasons to vote for the Greens (or Lib Dems) with second preferences to Sadiq Khan

London has all 352 road links in the UK expected to exceed the legal limit for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) in 2020. 41 of these are expected to exceed the limit in 2025

Zac Goldsmith is the only leading candidate for Mayor of London who wouldn't implement Boris Johnson's so-called Ultra Low Emission Zone 'sooner' than September 2020. The measure is intended to reduce NO₂ from diesel vehicles to achieve compliance with legal limits

Our final 'Clean Air Scores' of manifestos and other pledges by Mayoral candidates are: Sian Berry (Green) 'Perfect 10/10'; Caroline Pidgeon (Liberal Democrat) 8/10; Sadiq Khan (Labour) 6.25/10; and Zac Goldsmith (Conservative) on 4/10

Clean Air in London (CAL) recommends people give their first preference vote to Sian Berry (or Caroline Pidgeon) and second preference vote to Sadiq Khan for Mayor of London. The latter is a tactical voting recommendation to ensure action on diesel cars before 2020. CAL also recommends that people 'Vote Green on Orange' on the London-wide London Assembly list

CAL is making this intervention after countless failed attempts to persuade Zac Goldsmith to implement the ULEZ 'sooner'. We hear Zac may even have defended his 2020 timing in a BBC Radio 4 interview saying "[he didn't] want to upset people who had bought diesel cars recently"

CAL is calling for diesel vehicles to be banned from the most polluted parts of London before 2020 as coal burning was banned so successfully exactly 60 years ago (on 5th July 1956). Paris is already heading in this direction. Banning diesel would reduce inequalities in London

As a reminder of the seriousness of this issue, MODERATE or HIGH air pollution is expected to hang over London on Thursday as electors go to the Polls

Air pollution is the single most important issue that will be decided by the London Mayoral elections whether people realise it or not.

That's because it is the biggest issue that affects every Londoner and over which the Mayor has the greatest control i.e. unlike housing or the economy. In particular, the Mayor has complete control over transport emissions which are the biggest single source of air pollution within London ^{Note 4}.

All the UK's most polluted roads are in London. Clean Air in London (CAL) has used powerful European access to environmental information laws to reveal that the Government expects 352 road links in the UK to breach the UK and European legal limit for annual mean concentrations of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) in 2020. 41 of these locations are still expected to be breaching the legal limit in 2025.

The locations can be seen here for 2020 and/or 2025 with NO₂ concentrations and rankings:

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=1Pm56n7vrZ675k1H-J68dVhXyTbE>

Boris Johnson's track record

Boris' track record on traffic pollution has been awful including:

- scrapping the CO₂ Charge;
- delaying Phase 3 of the low emission zone by 15 months;
- scrapping the western extension of the congestion charging zone; and
- giving a 100% discount to newer diesel vehicles emitting less than 99 g/km of CO₂.

Almost all these measures have benefited car drivers at the expense of others.

Perhaps most shocking, CAL found Boris Johnson guilty of 'public health fraud on an industrial scale' for spraying 'glue' in front of the air quality monitors most-used to report legal breaches and warn the public of air pollution episodes in the months leading up to the London 2012 Olympics.

Ultra Low Emission Zone

After years of failures and backward steps on air pollution, Boris Johnson has proposed a so-called Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) that is too small, too weak and too late. It will impose a modest daily charge on the oldest diesel vehicles entering the central congestion charging zone from September 2020. A 'show of hands' at a large stakeholder event organised by Transport for London in late 2013 revealed that not one person present considered the scheme ambitious.

A freedom of information request to Transport for London revealed that diesel vehicles are responsible for 90% to 95% of NO₂ exhaust emissions in London ^{Note 3}. Separately, Boris Johnson's response to a European-wide survey of action by cities revealed in 2013 that 56% of fine particles (PM_{2.5}) and 63% of oxides of nitrogen (NOx) emitted in London in 2015 would be caused by road transport ^{Note 4}. Of those transport emissions 54% of PM_{2.5}, 47% of NO₂ and 28% of NOx emissions were estimated to come from passenger cars including private hire vehicles.

It is vital therefore that the ULEZ is made bigger, stronger and smarter before 2020 with an intermediate step by May 2018. Paris and other cities are taking similar action now. All the leading candidates for Mayor of London, except Zac Goldsmith would make the ULEZ bigger and implement it 'sooner'. Sian Berry and Caroline Pidgeon have also pledged to make it stronger and smarter.

Clean Air Scores

CAL has analysed the leading Mayoral candidates' manifestos and/or contacted them or their teams to produce 'Clean Air Scores' ^{Note 1}.

These scores are brutal, transparent and fair by focussing on the most important sources of air pollution and the solutions where the Mayor has the greatest possible control over the outcome. They ignore, for example, calls by candidates for a Government funded scrappage scheme for diesel vehicles.

For the following pledges the candidates have received up to 10 points:

1. Leading a Clean Air Revolution One point
2. Building public understanding of air pollution and issuing smog alerts One point
3. Banning diesel exhaust in stages
 - Bigger ULEZ before 2020 One point
 - Stronger ULEZ before 2020 One point
 - Smarter ULEZ before 2020 i.e. Emissions Based Road Charging One point
 - Implementing Boris' version of the ULEZ before 2020 One point
4. Promoting active travel including pedestrianisation e.g. #signforcycling One point
5. Reducing building emissions, renewable energy, banning incinerators One point

Candidates hit the jackpot with two extra points if they back CAL's full manifesto ^{Note 1} which contains many other important but 'second order' measures e.g. relating to taxis and PHVs.

Final Clean Air Scores revealed today are: Sian Berry 'Perfect 10/10'; Caroline Pidgeon 8/10; Sadiq Khan 6.25/10; and Zac Goldsmith 4/10.

Worst NO₂ locations

CAL has modelled the Government's latest baseline data and found 352 places across the whole of London expected to breach World Health Organisation guidelines and legal limits for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) still in 2020 with 41 of these still breaching in 2025.

The only subsequent measure proposed by Boris Johnson to address this catastrophe is his so-called ULEZ which is too small, too weak and too late in September 2020. Worse, it will cover only a tiny fraction of these breaches and worsen many of them along boundary roads such as Euston Road, Grosvenor Place, Knightsbridge, Marylebone Road and Upper and Lower Thames Street.

This new data reminds us of the conveniently optimistic projections used by the Government to defend its court case against ClientEarth which do not assume the full horror of real world vehicle emission failings compared to test standards.

Air pollution episode on Election Day

The Department of Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), which uses Met Office forecasts of air pollution, is expecting widespread MODERATE air pollution on Thursday and Friday with HIGH in places by Saturday. The Met Office forecast excludes urban roadsides where air pollution is usually worse so CAL is expecting HIGH air pollution in parts of London by Thursday afternoon. Details and health advice can be seen here:

<https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/> and <http://www.londonair.org.uk/LondonAir/Default.aspx>

Quotes

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

“Clean Air in London (CAL) has campaigned for many months for the Mayoral candidates to take action on the biggest levers in the fight against air pollution. We have been largely successful with one notable exception.

“We have singularly failed to persuade Zac Goldsmith to take urgent action to reduce diesel pollution from cars and other vehicles. We are therefore taking the unprecedented step of asking people not to vote for Zac Goldsmith in the London Mayoral election. Zac, a famous environmentalist, seems constrained by ‘car is king’ Conservatives who have dominated Boris Johnson’s time in office.

“Eliminating carcinogenic diesel exhaust is the single most important issue where the Mayor has the greatest possible control. In reality, the Mayor has 100% control of transport emissions and costs and little else.

“All the leading Mayoral candidates other than Zac Goldsmith have pledged to consult on implementing a bigger Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) ‘sooner’ than planned by Boris Johnson for September 2020. The new NO₂ data highlights the folly of Zac Goldsmith being the only leading candidate not to propose a bigger ULEZ ‘sooner’. There is a wide gulf between Zac and all the other leading Mayoral candidates on the most significant issue for the London Mayoral election.

“Not only can’t we wait four and a half years to begin restrictions on diesel cars, which would be similar to those that Berlin introduced in January 2010, but the timing means that we’d still need to be campaigning in four years’ time for the same scheme to be implemented by the next Mayor. That is unacceptable.

“As a reminder of the seriousness of this issue, MODERATE or HIGH air pollution is expected to hang over London on Thursday as electors go to the Polls. The Met Office’s forecast, used by the Government, understates the risk because it excludes urban roadside locations where pollution is usually worse. There is a risk of HIGH air pollution in parts of London on Thursday afternoon that may linger into Friday. Will candidates promising alerts after they’re elected help warn people this week?”

“We congratulate Sian Berry and Caroline Pidgeon and thank Sadiq Khan for their commitment to a more ambitious ULEZ ‘sooner’. CAL is grateful to George Galloway also for his commitment to action on diesel fumes ‘sooner’ than Zac proposes. Sophie Walker and Peter Whittle have also made powerful statements on clean air.

“Most important for now, we are asking Londoners to give Sadiq Khan at least their second preference vote in order to ensure action on carcinogenic diesel emissions is taken in the new Mayor’s term of office.”

Notes

1. Clean Air in London's manifesto for the Mayoral and London Assembly elections

<http://cleanair.london/clean-air-manifesto-2016/>

2. Defra's data

<https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/library/no2ten/2015-no2-projections-from-2013-data>

<https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/data/gis-mapping>

Previous data mapped by Jenny Jones AM of the London Assembly

<http://www.howpollutedismyroad.org.uk/>

3. Details of the so-called 'Ultra Low Emission Zone'

<https://tfl.gov.uk/modes/driving/ultra-low-emission-zone>

<http://cleanair.london/sources/carcinogenic-diesel-exhaust-disclosed-for-every-significant-road-in-london/>

4. Boris Johnson's response to a survey of air pollution measures

http://cleanair.london/wp-content/uploads/CAL-302-Mayors-response-to-City-Ranking-Questionnaire_2013_Redacted.pdf

5. Action by Paris and other cities

How Paris is stepping up its drive against the car (2 May 2016)

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-36169815>

<http://cleanair.london/solutions/mayor-gets-c-minus-in-new-ranking-of-air-quality-in-23-european-cities/>

6. Air pollution information and health advice

Latest hourly bulletin

<http://www.londonair.org.uk/london/asp/publicbulletin.asp>

Health advice

<http://www.londonair.org.uk/london/asp/airpollutionhealth.asp?HealthPage=HealthAdvice>

Defra information

<https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/>

N.B.

Defra's 'Latest measurement summary map' shows the rolling 24-hour picture whereas the London Air bulletins are reset at midnight so usually show LOW until lunchtime even during an episode.

Both Defra and London Air show current air pollution levels relative to alert levels which are very different from day to day health risks and annual mean legal limits which are much lower.