

20 August 2006

The Observer breaks the story on air pollution

The Observer newspaper broke the story today on the extent of air pollution problems in Central London. In a powerful and well researched article on page 3, Ned Temko, Chief Political Correspondent, highlighted the real impact of traffic pollution at street level.

1. Please read Ned Temko's article online at:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/2006/aug/20/transportintheuk.travelsenvironmentalimpact>

2. Details of the Knightsbridge Association's response to Defra's recent consultation on air quality and the 12 commitments it has sought from HM Government can be found on a recent BBC Action Network Campaign Notice (see link below). The Notice also highlights five key issues to understanding this complex area and information about the 17 amenity societies, representing virtually all of Central London, who chose, in their responses, to support the stance taken by the Knightsbridge Association in respect of their own areas. Most of these societies went further and sought exactly the same 12 commitments to address their most serious local air pollution problems.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/actionnetwork/F1636009?thread=3374587>

3. Please read also the recent comment on David Miliband's weblog, Secretary of State at the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), that emphasises the need for a clear stance by HM Government on air pollution before the crucial European Parliament part-session debate on Air pollution scheduled for 25 September. That debate will be a final step in determining the form of future legislation on air pollution across Europe for years to come. The Environment Leaders of the main political parties, and political leaders in London, are also being encouraged to give cross-party support to the 12 commitments sought by the Knightsbridge Association before 25 September.
4. Defra is encouraged to publish its technical report to the European Commission setting out areas that are in breach of legal limits, for fine particulate matter (i.e. less than 10 microns in diameter called PM₁₀) for the 2005 calendar year, drawing on both monitoring results and information on air quality derived using computer models, in good time before the 25 September debate, rather than perhaps shortly after, in order to illuminate the parliamentary debate about the extent of the air pollution problems in the United Kingdom. Last week, Defra published consultation documents about different information on nitrogen dioxide based on 2004 information.
5. Finally, information about how you can contribute to this Campaign to improve air quality, including details of who to write to and some suggested points to emphasise, can be found on the link below: "How can I contribute to this campaign?" If are short of time, just send David Miliband an email and say that you are worried about air pollution and want, for your area, what the Knightsbridge Association wants for its area.

The lesson of the BBC Action Network is that you can change the world if you try!

Simon Birkett
Chairman
Transport and Environment Committee
The Knightsbridge Association

Notes:

The World Health Organisation recommends that nitrogen dioxide should not exceed an annual mean level of $40 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ and an hourly mean of $200 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. Current European Commission legislation is due to enforce these levels from 1 January 2010 including allowing no more than 18 exceedances of the hourly maximum in any year. Legal limits for PM₁₀ have been in force since 1 January 2005.

According to the excellent London Air Quality Network, recent nitrogen dioxide levels at key sites in Central London have been:

<http://www.londonair.org.uk/london/asp/advstatsaqobjresults.asp?site1=KC2&site2=KC4&site3=MY1&site4=&sday=1&smoth=jan&year=2006&Submit=View>

BROMPTON ROAD

2006 (so far)

Annual mean: $99 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$

Number of hours over $200 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$: 268 (i.e. just short of the 12 month total for 2005 in only eight months)

2005

Annual mean: $90 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$

Number of hours over $200 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$: 288

KING'S ROAD

2006 (so far)

Annual mean: $94 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$

Number of hours over $200 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$: 69

2005

Annual mean: $91 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$

Number of hours over $200 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$: 82

MARYLEBONE ROAD

2006 (so far)

Annual mean: $103 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$

Number of hours over $200 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$: 339

2005

Annual mean: 113 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$

Number of hours over 200 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$: 849