

7 January 2010

**‘Clean Air in London’ congratulates National Audit Office on its air quality report highlighting: government’s failure to comply with air pollution laws; health impact of poor air quality; Mayor’s delay of Phase 3 of LEZ; and confused delivery framework**

**Environmental Audit Committee takes oral evidence from Mayor of London’s Environment Adviser, Isabel Dedring, who “would tend to agree” “some of the government estimates are on the low side for the consequences of poor air quality”**

**Lord Berkeley articulates clearly air quality failings in London in House of Lords debate on Olympic and Paralympic Games 2012. Lord Berkeley refers to ‘Clean Air in London’ estimate of up to 7,900 premature deaths in London in 2005**

The Campaign for Clean Air in London (CCAL) welcomes the high-profile highlighting this week, in separate developments, of the government’s failure to tackle air pollution over the last 10 years and the serious health consequences arising.

CCAL calls on the government to apologise for not warning the public, as it should have done, about the full extent of the health risks of poor air quality after its failure to update, or its ‘covering-up’ of, over 250,000 premature deaths due to dangerous airborne particles over 10 years.

### **NAO publishes its briefing on air quality for Environmental Audit Committee**

The House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee (EAC) announced on 21 October 2009 its new inquiry into Air Quality. The purpose of the inquiry is to assess whether the Government is developing an effective strategy for meeting its obligations under the EU Air Quality Directives.

As a prelude to that inquiry, the EAC asked the National Audit Office (NAO) to prepare an overview of the UK’s performance to date in meeting various targets and limits for each air pollutant. The NAO has published today its report on air quality. See:

[http://www.nao.org.uk/publications/0910/eac\\_briefing\\_-\\_air\\_quality.aspx](http://www.nao.org.uk/publications/0910/eac_briefing_-_air_quality.aspx)

Further details of the EAC’s inquiry into air quality, including its Terms of Reference, Next Evidence Session and Written Evidence received can be found on its homepage. See:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-archive/environmental-audit-committee/inquiry/>

### **Mayor of London’s Environment Adviser gives oral evidence to EAC**

The Mayor of London’s top Environment Adviser, Isabel Dedring, and Simon Cousins, a GLA Environment Programme Officer, gave evidence at the EAC’s first oral evidence session on air quality on Tuesday 5 January 2010.

The Mayor of London had previously submitted written evidence to the EAC. See:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmenvaud/memo/airquality/uc3202.htm>

Other Memoranda submitted to the EAC's air quality inquiry will be available at:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmenvaud/memo/airquality/contents.htm>

For the webcast of the meeting, please see (from 56 minutes to 1 hour 33 minutes):

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-archive/environmental-audit-committee/inquiry/>

A transcript of the oral evidence session will be available (in due course) on the EAC's Reports and Publications webpage.

### **Lord Berkeley articulates clearly London air quality failings in 2012 Olympics debate**

In a separate development on Tuesday 5 January, Lord Berkeley (Labour) spoke in a landmark debate in the House of Lords on the preparations for the Olympic and Paralympic Games 2012.

For the full text of Lord Berkeley's speech, see:

<http://www.theyworkforyou.com/lords/?gid=2010-01-05a.118.0>

For Lord Berkeley's speech in the context of the full, two hour, debate, please see:

<http://www.theyworkforyou.com/lords/?id=2010-01-05a.103.2#g118.0>

### **Quotes**

Simon Birkett, Founder of the cross-party Campaign for Clean Air in London (CCAL), said: "The

Campaign for Clean Air in London welcomes the high-profile highlighting this week, in separate developments, of the government's failure to tackle air pollution over the last 10 years and the serious health consequences arising."

### National Audit Office report on air quality

"CCAL congratulates the National Audit Office (NAO) on its hard-hitting report on UK air quality which highlights the:

- i. government's failure to comply with air pollution laws and targets for dangerous airborne particles (PM<sub>10</sub>), nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>), oxides of nitrogen (NO<sub>x</sub>), ozone (O<sub>3</sub>), polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH) and sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) under the air quality laws, the National Emissions Ceilings Directive and otherwise;

- ii. source of the government's 'up to 24,000 [premature] deaths per year' due to air pollution as being a report on the impact of short term exposure to air pollution (sulphur dioxide, PM<sub>10</sub> or ozone) published by the Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollution (COMEAP) in 1998 (see paragraph 1.11 on page 11) <sup>Note 1</sup>;
- iii. Mayor of London's draft strategy setting back Phase 3 of the London low emission zone to 2012, a year after the extended deadline for compliance with the limit value [for PM<sub>10</sub>] (see paragraph 2.29 on page 23); and
- iv. confused and ineffective delivery framework that exists currently to tackle air pollution (see Figure 8 on page 28 and Figure 11 on page 38).

"This is an excellent report which should be compulsory reading for anyone interested in judging the UK government's track record of complying with its obligations to reduce air pollution. CCAL urges the EAC to make good use of the NAO's hard-hitting evidence."

#### Environmental Audit Committee takes oral evidence from Mayor's Environment Adviser

"CCAL was impressed by the EAC's first oral evidence session on air quality on 5 January including the frankness of answers given by the Mayor's Environment Adviser. It was refreshing to hear:

- i. an acknowledgement from the EAC of evidence it has received alleging that "some of the government estimates are on the low side for the consequences of poor air quality". When asked for a view on such evidence, the Mayor's Environment Adviser responded "we would tend to agree [with it]" (1 hour 28 minutes);
- ii. a recognition that "a couple of hundred million pounds is needed ideally to tackle this problem [of poor air quality]" (1 hour 16 minutes); and
- iii. EU legal action and the threat of unlimited fines are having the positive effect of energising people to take action, belatedly, to protect public health and comply with air quality laws (1 hour 17 minutes).

"CCAL has offered to give oral evidence to the EAC."

#### Lord Berkeley's speech in parliamentary debate on Olympic and Paralympic Games 2012

"Lord Berkeley is to be congratulated for articulating so clearly the urgent need to improve air quality in London in a high-profile debate in the House of Lords on the first day back after the Christmas recess. In particular, Lord Berkeley highlighted the:

- i. breaching by "a very wide margin" of air quality standards in London" <sup>Note 2</sup> and "We have to remember [also] that the UK is the largest emitter of NO<sub>x</sub> in the whole of Europe and is set to breach the emissions ceiling by 2010";
- ii. massive health impact of poor air quality. "This may all seem a little scientific and detailed but it is worth reminding ourselves that the Campaign for Clean Air in London estimates that in 2005 up to 7,900 premature deaths were due to dangerous airborne

- particles [PM<sub>10</sub>] in London. On average, those people, who account for about one in eight of the total deaths in London, may have died 10 years early”;
- iii. breaching of air quality laws for PM<sub>10</sub> every year since 2005 and the prospect of further breaches for PM<sub>10</sub> and NO<sub>2</sub>. “I have to ask my noble friend why the Government are being so patient with the mayor”;
  - iv. opportunity for the Olympic Delivery Authority to “save about 800,000 lorry journeys around Stratford between last year and the time of the Olympics”;
  - v. need for urgent action by the Mayor and the government. “Do we want them to be called the high-pollution Olympics? I hope not”; and
  - vi. question: “how [can] the government say that the preparations for the Olympics are going well and breaking new grounds of sustainability in a healthy and enjoyable environment?”

“CCAL supports strongly Lord Berkeley’s recommendation that the government should waste no further time and give the Mayor of London full legal responsibility for complying with air quality laws, at least for PM<sub>10</sub>, in London. Lord Berkeley is also right to highlight the: merits of the Government’s boiler scrappage scheme; need to ban [or clean up] pre-Euro 4 diesel vehicles by 2012; and other practical steps to improve air quality.”

#### CCAL calls for government apology over air quality failings or ‘cover-ups’

“With Parliament’s most heavyweight groups – the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee, the National Audit Office and the House of Lords – all now engaged fully in the real issues around poor air quality in the UK, we must expect to see urgent and meaningful action at last.”

“Importantly, evidence from the NAO has confirmed, yet again, the government’s failure since 1998 to update, or its ‘covering-up’ of, the real number of premature deaths due to dangerous airborne particles – despite scientific research pointing to much higher numbers.

“CCAL calls on the government to apologise for not warning the public, as it should have done, about the full extent of the health risks of poor air quality. CCAL urges the EAC and others to support such a call.”

#### **Notes:**

##### 1. Health impact of exposure to dangerous airborne particles

The number of 24,000 premature deaths, referred to by the government, includes 8,100 due to short term exposure to PM<sub>10</sub> air pollution compared with CCAL’s estimate of some 35,000 due to long term exposure to PM<sub>2.5</sub> (i.e. fine particulate matter which comprises around 70% of PM<sub>10</sub>). The government has published no new estimate of premature deaths (whether short-term, long term or total for either PM<sub>2.5</sub> or PM<sub>10</sub>) since 1998. The government says the coarse fraction of dangerous airborne particles (i.e. PM<sub>2.5-10</sub>) contains no significant health risk.

For further details, please see the COMEAP report published in 1998 titled 'Quantification of the Effects of Air Pollution on Health in the United Kingdom':

[http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH\\_4006323](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_4006323)

2. Quantification of the number of premature deaths due to poor air quality

The European Topic Centre on Air and Climate Change published a report in June 2009 titled 'Assessment of the health impacts of exposure to PM<sub>2.5</sub> at a European level'. See:

[http://acm.eionet.europa.eu/reports/ETCACC\\_TP\\_2009\\_1\\_European\\_PM2.5\\_HIA](http://acm.eionet.europa.eu/reports/ETCACC_TP_2009_1_European_PM2.5_HIA)

3. London Air Quality Network results for 2009

Marylebone Road

<http://www.londonair.org.uk/london/asp/publicstats.asp?region=0&bulletin=&site=MY1&postcode=&statyear=2009&mapview=all&objective=All>

Brompton Road

<http://www.londonair.org.uk/london/asp/publicstats.asp?region=0&bulletin=&site=KC3&postcode=&statyear=2009&mapview=all&objective=All>