

Boris Johnson
Mayor of London
Greater London Authority
City Hall
Queen's Walk
More London
London SE1 2AA

4 December 2010

Dear Mayor Johnson

Two bold steps within one week to address London's air pollution problems

Thank you for your letter of 29 November in which you graciously declined an invitation to become an honorary Founder Supporter of Clean Air in London for understandable reasons. You finished your very encouraging letter with an offer to 'support Clean Air in London in any other way that I can'.

There is a wonderful opportunity for London to be at the forefront of efforts to tackle the terrible impact of poor air quality which you have estimated as including 4,267 premature deaths in 2008 attributable to long-term exposure to dangerous airborne particles (PM_{2.5}). As you will know, there were just over 50,000 deaths in total in London in 2007 (Source: Office of National Statistics).

Clean Air in London asks only that you write please two letters now along the lines set out below.

Let's admit the scale of the problem

Clean Air in London's first request is that you write within the next week to Commissioner Potočník, the European Commissioner for the Environment, saying that in your considered view – and without accepting or apportioning blame – that in London:

- i. the PM₁₀ daily limit value has been exceeded in 2010;
- ii. the nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) hourly limit value has been exceeded in 2010;
- iii. the NO₂ annual mean limit value is certain to be exceeded in 2010;
- iv. the NO₂ annual mean limit value plus maximum margin of tolerance may be exceeded in 2010; and
- v. irrespective of your view on the likelihood or otherwise of the PM₁₀ daily limit value being complied with throughout London in 2011 (on which you might choose to disagree), the UK has not met all the conditions necessary to obtain a time extension until 2011 to comply with that limit value in London.

Please say also to Commissioner Potočník that in your considered view the UK, as a Member State, should not oppose a European Court of Justice (ECJ) judgement confirming the above and requesting action to ensure full compliance.

Please make a personal commitment to Commissioner Potočník that you will do everything you can to ensure these breaches will be rectified so as to avoid after an ECJ judgement: a first written

warning from the European Commission for non-compliance with the ECJ judgement; a final written warning; and a further ECJ judgment that would trigger fines you have said could total £300m per year per pollutant.

Let's do something about it

Given the scale, complexity and urgency of the UK's air pollution problem there is a need for national and London action and cross-departmental Government action on an almost unprecedented scale to tackle this little-recognised public health crisis.

Clean Air in London's second request is that you write to the Prime Minister within the next week informing him that you have written to Commissioner Potočník along the lines outlined above and saying that, in your considered view, the only way to tackle successfully this public health crisis within the timescales needed is for the Prime Minister and you to chair jointly a Clean Air Compliance Taskforce steering group that would meet once a month between now and 2012.

I would encourage you to establish the steering group as a cross-party entity that would meet under the Chatham House Rule unless the Prime Minister and you consider this would be unworkable.

As an aside, Clean Air in London's view is that the costs and management task of tackling of the NO₂ challenge must be met 50% by London and 50% by central Government.

Carpe diem

Both these actions are needed now and you could do them within the next week. If you will take these steps, the specific actions necessary to put London at the forefront of tackling air pollution will follow.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely

Simon Birkett
Founder and Director
Clean Air in London

Cc:

The Rt. Hon. David Cameron MP, Prime Minister
Commissioner Potočník, European Commissioner for the Environment
The Rt. Hon. Caroline Spelman MP, Secretary of State for Environment Food and Rural Affairs
Honorary Founder Supporters of Clean Air in London