

OUTSIDE MONITORING



Clean Air for London



Simon Birkett tells us how he is using bespoke research from BBCM in the campaign for clean air in London

Clean Air in London (CAL) has spent 15 years campaigning for full compliance, urgently and sustainably, with World Health Organisation (WHO) air quality guidelines throughout London and elsewhere. Although updated guidelines were expected in July, the WHO now expects to publish them in September.

The UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow this November will be the most important environmental meeting since the Paris Agreement was signed in December 2015. The president for COP26, MP Alok Sharma, said in May that the meeting would be “our last hope of keeping 1.5 degrees alive. Our best chance of building a brighter future. A future of green jobs and cleaner air.”

Achieving ‘Net zero’ should significantly improve air quality because combustion emissions are responsible for about 80% of local air pollution and greenhouse gases, according to UK government data.

We contacted BBC Monitoring, whose response was immediate and productive



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CAL was looking therefore to make a number of strategic interventions before COP26 to sharpen the government's focus on necessary outcomes and highlight to all those involved the wide range of tough issues that need to be addressed with sufficient time left to tackle them.

We contacted BBC Monitoring, whose response was immediate and productive. In a project that progressed in four phases, we identified, for each of the top 20 country territorial emitters of carbon dioxide (CO2) and selected others, the COP26 negotiating priorities with evidence. BBC Monitoring also analysed the relevance of 20 themes relating to air pollution and climate change for each country. The final pieces of the jigsaw included the identification of the top 10-25 players and events in English in each country across five themes of climate change, air pollution, cities, health and justice.

The breadth and depth of BBC Monitoring's ability to analyse open source intelligence from almost any country is incredible: their network of bureaux and experts covered every continent except Antarctica; used more than a dozen languages; and meant we were able to understand as much about a few extra Middle Eastern countries and Small Island Developing States as we were about China, India, Iran, Russia, Turkey and the United States of America.

The final result was a 100-page two-part report edited and published by CAL which drew heavily on BBC Monitoring's research. CAL submitted this report formally to Tom Tugendhat, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee, a week before he was due to Chair the 'Committee on COP26' oral hearing on 'Climate diplomacy and COP26' with Alok Sharma in May 2021.

After the hearing, CAL published the report online, shared it on social media and emailed it to several hundred people in non-governmental organisations, think-tanks, the media, the United Nations family and many government contacts around the world.

CAL has now asked BBC Monitoring to help it update the report in July 2021 after the G7 meeting and other important events in June.

No-one following COP26, including the UK Parliament's select committees, can now be in any doubt about what is needed and the challenges ahead.



Simon Birkett is founder and director of Clean Air in London, which he established after a long career in the finance sector

25



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