

8 December 2014

Best report yet from the Environmental Audit Committee (EAC) on air pollution slams the Government for five years of inaction and adds no credibility to the Mayor's claims of success in London

EAC puts forward a comprehensive and practical package of measures to reduce air pollution (particularly diesel in cities) and protect people (particularly the most vulnerable in schools, hospitals and care homes). Let's be clear though, air pollution affects us all

Key recommendations include: move away from diesel vehicles; remove loopholes allowing the removal of factory-fitted diesel particle filters; make it impossible to build new schools, care homes or health clinics near existing air pollution hotspots and fit air filtration systems to existing schools near pollution hotspots; institute a national campaign to build public understanding of air pollution; update the previous Government's 2007 Air Quality Strategy; and back Europe's Clean Air Policy Package

Clean Air in London (CAL) urges the Government to respond quickly and publish nationwide estimates of deaths attributable to nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and commit to update them annually in the Public Health Indicators alongside deaths attributable to fine particles (PM_{2.5})

Exactly 62 years after the Great Smog in London and one week before the birth of the Clean Air Act, the EAC's report shows why we need to ban diesel from the most polluted places as we banned coal so successfully 60 years ago. Let's lead the world not have to follow other great cities like Paris, Madrid and Rome

'Clean Air in London' (CAL) applauds the hard-hitting report from Parliament's powerful Environmental Audit Committee (EAC) titled 'Action on Air Quality'. The EAC's media release and report are available on the Committee's website at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/report-air-quality>

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmselect/cmenvaud/212/212.pdf>

The EAC says:

"This is now our third report on air quality in five years. Our predecessor Environmental Audit Committee reported on air quality in 2010. In 2011 we published a follow-up report. Our main recommendations for the Government in 2010 and 2011 have not been implemented. Meanwhile air pollution continues to be an invisible killer, costing the lives of 29,000 people per year. The UK Government has been found guilty of failing to meet EU air quality targets in our cities, some of which will not meet the required limits until 2030. However, meeting EU standards should be the minimum requirement. Regardless of EU rulings it is unacceptable that UK citizens could have their health seriously impaired over decades before this public health problem is brought under control.

"A fresh approach is needed for the health challenge we face, coordinating action by local authorities and communities as well as the Government."

Key EAC recommendations

The EAC says the Government must act urgently and makes 19 recommendations. Selected recommendations include:

1. Diesel

- Introduce a national framework for low emission zones to help local authorities reduce air pollution.
- Examine fiscal and other measures to gradually encourage a move away from diesel vehicles towards low emission options.
- Close legal loopholes to end the practice of removing filter systems from existing [diesel] vehicles. “[The EAC expects] an early statement [from Ministers] on actions planned”.

2. Planning

- Adjust planning guidance to protect air quality in local planning and development. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) should make it impossible to build new schools, care homes or health clinics near existing air pollution hotspots, and any redevelopment of such existing buildings should only be approved if they reduce pollution exposure for their users. Building regulations should provide for existing schools sited near pollution hotspots to be fitted with air filtration systems.
- Build air quality obligations into transport infrastructure.

3. Support local authorities

- Engage with local authorities to establish best practice in tackling air pollution.

4. Public awareness

- Institute a national public awareness campaign to increase understanding of air pollution. Government should work more closely with the Met Office, BBC and other broadcasters to ensure that high air pollution forecasts are disseminated widely via mainstream media in the same way pollen and UV forecasts are broadcast now, together with advice on what action should be taken.

5. New Air Quality Strategy

- The Government should update the previous Government’s ‘Air Quality Strategy’ of 2007, adopting a cross-Government approach with clear demarcation of responsibilities between departments and between central and local government.
- Comply with British and European legal limits for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) as soon as possible.

6. Clean Air Policy Package

- Apply pressure at European level to ensure effective EU legislation and emission standards backed up by a robust testing regime.

Staggeringly, the UK (Liz Truss) was the only large country other than Poland not to sign a recent letter to President Juncker calling on him to give ‘high priority’ to the Clean Air Policy Package.

Indoor air quality

CAL has campaigned for more than three years to build public understanding of indoor air quality with sponsorship and support from Camfil UK.

CAL is particularly pleased therefore to see the importance of indoor air quality highlighted in EAC’s report as European’s spend 90% of their time indoors on average and it is possible to reduce air pollution indoors by up to 90%.

Schools, hospitals, care homes and other buildings may have any, all or none of mechanical ventilation, air conditioning or air filtration. All non-residential buildings should comply with British and European standards E13779 and EN779 for air filtration. Complying with these standards should be cost neutral for schools and others with mechanical ventilation if they use low energy air filters and cost about £10 per square metre in capital cost and £2-3 per annum thereafter if standalone air cleaners are required. This might represent a total one-off capital cost for standalone air cleaners of about £1,000 per classroom plus £250 per annum thereafter for energy and maintenance for schools in air pollution hotspots.

CAL found that few local authorities know if their schools use air filters that protect children.

<http://cleanair.london/indoor-air-quality/few-local-authorities-know-if-their-schools-use-air-filters-that-protect-children/>

An investigation by Liberal Democrats in London in 2014 found that (see Summary on page 5):

- 80 per cent of schools were concerned about the health effects of poor air quality on children attending their school.
- only one-in-20 head teachers (5 per cent) reported receiving any information about air pollution in the last 12 months from either their local authority, Transport for London or the Greater London Authority.
- only around a third of schools reported using a mechanical ventilation and/or filtration system in their school buildings.

http://cleanair.london/wp-content/uploads/CAL-273-London-Schools-Air-Quality-Survey-2014_Published-by-Liberal-Democrats.pdf

A separate investigation by CAL found that air filters in hospitals may be no better than warehouses.

<http://cleanair.london/indoor-air-quality/air-quality-in-hospitals-may-be-no-better-than-warehouses/>

<http://www.theyworkforyou.com/wrans/?id=2014-02-04a.185587.h>

Quotes

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

“This is the best report yet from the Environmental Audit Committee (EAC) on air pollution that slams the Government for five years of inaction.

“The EAC puts forward a comprehensive and practical package of measures to reduce air pollution (particularly diesel in cities) and protect people (particularly the most vulnerable in schools, hospitals and care homes). Let’s be clear though, air pollution affects us all.

“Importantly, the Committee highlights for the first time the dangers of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) equally with particles and includes reference to the first ever estimates of deaths attributable to NO₂ that were calculated by Clean Air in London. CAL calls on the Government to respond quickly and publish nationwide estimates of deaths attributable to NO₂ and commit to update them annually in the Public Health Indicators alongside deaths attributable to fine particles (PM_{2.5}).

“The EAC adds no credibility to the Mayor’s claims of success in reducing air pollution, instead – rightly – giving prominence to evidence demonstrating the painfully slow lack of progress and ambition in London. At best, concentrations of NO₂ in London have reduced by about 2% per annum since Boris Johnson became Mayor in 2008. At that pace, it will take 35 years to reduce NO₂ concentrations in Oxford Street to legal levels and compliance with World Health Organisation guidelines. Documents prepared for the Mayor’s so-called ‘Ultra Low Emission Zone’ predict that everyone in Central London on average will still be exposed to illegal levels of NO₂ still in 2020. In stark contrast, other cities like Madrid, Paris and Rome are planning to ban most vehicles from central areas by 2020 or earlier.

“CAL urges the Government and the Mayor to accept quickly the EAC’s recommendations in full and take the bold action recommended to reduce pollution and protect people from the biggest public health risk after smoking.

“Exactly 62 years after the Great Smog in London and one week before the birth of the Clean Air Act, the EAC’s report shows why we need to ban diesel from the most polluted places as we banned coal so successfully 60 years ago. Let’s lead the world not have to follow other great cities like Paris, Madrid and Rome.”

ENDS

Notes

1. Environmental Audit Committee (EAC) Inquiry into Air Quality 2014

<http://www.parliament.uk/report-air-quality>

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmselect/cmenvaud/212/212.pdf>

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/environmental-audit-committee/inquiries/parliament-2010/airquality/>

EAC report in 2010

22 March 2010 (Volumes 1 and 2)

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmenvaud/229/229i.pdf>

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmenvaud/229/229ii.pdf>

Government response – 22 November 2010

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/238341/7966.pdf.pdf

EAC report in 2011

EAC reports – 14 November 2011 (Volumes 1 and 2)

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmenvaud/1024/1024.pdf>

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmenvaud/1024/1024vw.pdf>

Government response - 27 February 2012

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmenvaud/1820/1820.pdf>

2. Great Smog and Clean Air Act

<http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/education/teens/case-studies/great-smog>

<http://cleanair.london/calendar/>

3. NO₂ mortality

<http://cleanair.london/sources/mayor-publishes-health-study-revealing-deaths-attributable-to-no2/>

4. Other cities are being much more ambitious than London

Nitrogen dioxide trends

The Mayor told the EAC:

“...initial analysis undertaken by King’s College London suggests that reductions in NO₂ concentrations across London at roadside sites are in the order of twelve per cent on average from 2008 to 2013.”

http://cleanair.london/wp-content/uploads/CAL-295-TfL-LEZ-Supplementary-information_November-2006_3-pages_Reduced-file-size.pdf

<http://www.itv.com/news/london/2014-02-24/fff/>

Emission requirements

http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/environment/air_pollution/128186_en.htm

<http://www.driving.co.uk/news/is-diesel-doomed-why-the-lawmakers-have-turned-against-the-fuel-they-promoted/>

Urban access regulations

<http://urbanaccessregulations.eu/urban-access-regulations/overview-of-key-ars>

Madrid

<http://www.citylab.com/commute/2014/09/central-madrid-rolls-out-a-tough-love-plan-to-limit-cars/380642/>

<http://www.planetizen.com/node/71456>

Paris

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-30368504>

<http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/11/28/uk-france-diesel-idUKKCN0JC1RY20141128>

<http://www.lejdd.fr/JDD-Paris/Anne-Hidalgo-Nous-ne-voulons-plus-de-diesel-a-Paris-705124>

Rome

<http://urbanaccessregulations.eu/countries-mainmenu-147/italy-mainmenu-81/rome-ar>

5. Diesel

<http://cleanair.london/health/complaint-to-advertising-standards-authority-about-mayors-ulez-advertisement/>

<http://cleanair.london/sources/boris-takes-backward-steps-on-his-own-ulez/>

<http://cleanair.london/hot-topics/stop-hiding-air-pollution-and-ban-diesel-exhaust-in-two-stages-to-2020-as-coal-was-banned-60-years-ago/>

<http://cleanair.london/hot-topics/thousands-may-be-driving-diesel-vehicles-illegally-after-government-failures/>

6. Planning – Schools, care homes and hospitals

<http://cleanair.london/sources/clean-air-in-london-has-found-1148-schools-in-london-within-150-metres-of-busiest-roads/>

http://cleanair.london/wp-content/uploads/CAL-273-London-Schools-Air-Quality-Survey-2014_Published-by-Liberal-Democrats.pdf

<http://cleanair.london/indoor-air-quality/eight-wins-for-clean-air-in-london-in-new-london-plan/>

7. Indoor air quality

Our presentation about indoor air quality including EN13779.

http://cleanair.london/wp-content/uploads/CAL-144-CF-Road-Show-131011_Final_131011.pdf

<http://cleanair.london/hot-topics/indoor-air-quality-can-be-worse-than-outdoor/>

CAL recommends that air filters are used in mechanical ventilation systems or in standalone units such as Camfil's CamCleaner (which requires power but not mechanical ventilation). Low energy air filters are preferable to comply with British and European standards EN13779 and EN779. Case studies for a school, hospital and office:

<http://www.camfil.co.uk/FileArchive/Case%20Story%20Presentations/School%20and%20University/Air%20Cleaners%20in%20Education%20Facilities%20-%20Case%20Study.pdf>

<http://www.camfil.co.uk/FileArchive/Case%20Story%20Presentations/Hospital/Air%20Cleaners%20Hospital%20-%20Case%20Study.pdf>

<http://www.camfil.co.uk/FileArchive/Case%20Story%20Presentations/Commercial%20buildings/Air%20Cleaners%20for%20London%20Office%20in%20Euston%20-%20Case%20Study.pdf>

CAL understands that air filters remove particles and gases that are not removed by ultra violet light and similar treatments. Hospitals, airports and other buildings preparing to receive ebola patients need E14 HEPA class air filters with two such units in series.

Schools

<http://cleanair.london/indoor-air-quality/few-local-authorities-know-if-their-schools-use-air-filters-that-protect-children/>

<http://cleanair.london/sources/clean-air-in-london-has-found-1148-schools-in-london-within-150-metres-of-busiest-roads/>

http://cleanair.london/wp-content/uploads/CAL-139_75-schools-within-150-and-400-metres-of-London-roads-carrying-over-100000-vpd_searchable.pdf

http://cleanair.london/wp-content/uploads/CAL-139_1148-schools-within-150-metres-of-London-roads-carrying-over-10000-vpd_alphabetical-order-and-searchable.pdf

<http://www.jennyforlondon.org/schools/>

Hospitals

<http://cleanair.london/indoor-air-quality/air-quality-in-hospitals-may-be-no-better-than-warehouses/>

<http://www.theyworkforyou.com/wrans/?id=2014-02-04a.185587.h>

8. Support for local authorities and monitoring

<http://cleanair.london/health/defra-did-cover-up-smog-warnings-and-would-scrap-local-monitoring/>

9. Public awareness and active travel

<http://cleanair.london/news/introduction-to-smog/>

<http://www.mappingforchange.org.uk/services/citizen-science/>

<http://cleanair.london/sources/air-pollution-revealed-at-mayors-187-air-quality-focus-areas-for-first-time/>

10. New Air Quality Strategy

<http://healthyair.org.uk/documents/2014/11/healthy-air-campaign-policy-call-2.pdf/>

11. Clean Air Policy Package

Insert letter from EU Environment Ministers

<http://www.eeb.org/?LinkServID=6D656392-5056-B741-DB917208DA406BCA&showMeta=0&aa>

<http://www.eeb.org/?LinkServID=71B77C12-5056-B741-DB4FAD228733945E&showMeta=0&aa>