

Nottingham Friends of the Earth
Briefing note on air quality in Nottingham

- 1) In April 2014, Public Health England reported on local mortality associated with particulates, based on Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants (COMEAP) estimates of 29,000 deaths p.a. in the UK (including 150 in Nottingham City). In May 2014 the World Health Organisation produced a table of particulate levels in cities around the world showing Nottingham above the WHO guideline of 10µg/m³ for PM_{2.5}.
- 2) In October 2014, the Director of Public Health reported to the City's Health & Wellbeing Board the figure of 150 deaths p.a. due to particulates with a loss of 1,559 life years, of which up to 70% are due to traffic pollution – with no safe level of particulates. Actions suggested by the DPH included:
 - Nearly 80% of car trips under five miles could be replaced by walking, cycling or using public transport;
 - Promote active travel amongst local authority staff and major employers
 - Improve street environments to prioritise walkability over cars;
 - Inform susceptible individuals of the risks of air pollution and how to take avoiding action;
 - Organise 'eco-driving' training for taxi drivers, for example to avoid engine idling;
 - Replace boilers with least polluting models;
 - Ensure new buildings are air quality neutral;
 - Make full use of local authority powers to regulate types of traffic and traffic flows.
- 3) In December 2014, the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee published a report on Air Quality. Recommendations include: Low Emission Zones (as in London), planning guidance to prioritise air quality – linking new schools and workplaces with public transport and accessible by bicycle or foot, getting the most polluting vehicles off the road, and not siting schools, care homes, hospitals near busy roads. The Committee also noted that the government had failed to implement recommendations made by them in 2010 and 2011.
- 4) Since then a separate estimate has been published for deaths due to nitrogen dioxide (also mainly from traffic) of 23,500 p.a. for the UK. In February 2016, a report for the Royal Colleges of Physicians and Paediatrics & Child Health put together the figures for particulates and NO₂ (allowing for significant overlap) estimating a total around 40,000 deaths attributable to outdoor air pollution for the UK, with a cost to society over £20bn p.a. That would suggest over 200 deaths p.a. in Nottingham due to air pollution.
- 5) EU Directives required air pollution to be below agreed levels by 2010, with 5 years extra time allowed to the UK, though full compliance may not have been achieved until 2030. So in 2015 the Supreme Court ordered the UK government to produce a Plan to reduce air pollution. Defra finally produced an Action Plan in December 2015 – which mainly requires selected local authorities, including Nottingham City, to implement Clean Air Zones. The legislation based on EU Directives will presumably continue until any change is made following UK exit

from the EU.

- 6) Defra's plan for Nottingham suggests that a 'Class B Clean Air Zone' will be needed 'to reduce NO2 levels to the necessary level in the shortest possible time and by 2020 at the latest'. (Class B means restricting or charging HGVs, buses, coaches and taxis which don't meet required pollution standards (typically Euro VI), but there would be no restrictions on LGVs or cars.) The class and area of Zones 'will be finalised based on the scoping studies funded by Government'. As far as we are aware, no scoping studies have yet been commissioned.
- 7) Friends of the Earth wants to see:
 - action on Clean Air Zones as a matter of urgency (in all cities and large towns);
 - Clean Air Zones to include vans and cars, both petrol and diesel;
 - a national scrappage scheme for dirty diesels.
- 8) Friends of the Earth recommendations for individuals include:
 - Leave the car at home (one trial found that car drivers are exposed to twice the air pollution compared to walking the same route, and 8 times the exposure of cycling);
 - Walk away from the road edge;
 - Avoid congested routes whether in a car or bus, cycling or walking;
 - If driving, when stopped turn off the engine;
 - Take note of pollution alerts;
 - To reduce indoor air pollution: open windows, use natural cleaning products (and avoid air fresheners), don't smoke, maintain boilers and cookers;
 - Note that plants and trees catch air pollution so prefer walking through green areas – and get planting!
- 9) Nottingham Friends of the Earth supports action being taken by Nottingham City Council, including:
 - Workplace Parking Levy (which helps to reduce commuting by car as well as funding the tram);
 - Low emission vehicles
 - Electric vehicles, and electric charging points;
 - Promoting business travel plans and 'Smarter Choices';
 - Improved routes for walking and cycling;
 - Support for electrification of the Midland Mainline.
- 10) Questions we would like the Overview & Scrutiny Committee to ask include:
 - What progress has been made on the recommendations made in the DPH report of October 2014?
 - What progress has been made on the promised scoping report for a Clean Air Zone?
 - Has the Nottinghamshire Environmental Protection Working Group completed its review of local Air Quality Improvement Strategy (referred to in the DPH report of October 2014 and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment chapter on Air Quality of July 2015)?

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References:

Public Health England, April 2014:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/estimates-of-mortality-in-local-authority-areas-associated-with-air-pollution>

World Health Organisation, May 2014:

http://www.who.int/quantifying_ehimpacts/national/countryprofile/AAP_PM_database_May2014.xls

Health & Wellbeing Board, October 2014:

<http://committee.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=185&MIId=4277>

Environmental Audit Committee report, December 2014:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/environmental-audit-committee/news/report-air-quality/>

RCP/RCPCH report, February 2015:

<https://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/projects/outputs/every-breath-we-take-lifelong-impact-air-pollution>

Defra Air Quality Plan, December 2015:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/air-quality-plan-for-reducing-nitrogen-dioxide-no2-in-nottingham-urban-area-uk0008>

Joint Strategic Needs Assessment chapter on Air Quality, July 2015

<http://jsna.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/insight/Strategic-Framework/Nottinghamshire-JSNA/Cross-cutting-themes/Air-Quality.aspx>

Friends of the Earth advice:

<https://www.foe.co.uk/green-blog/how-avoid-toxic-fumes-from-transport>