

Dear Secretaries of State Gove, Hancock, Hammond, Grayling and Clark,

We are writing to you as UK residents and community groups, who are thoroughly concerned about the public health crisis of air pollution and the lack of focused actions by Government to address it with the appropriate urgency, methods and funds.

Pollution contributes to the early deaths of tens of thousands of UK residents a year, indeed, most likely more than 40,000 as the most recent research has shown. It is linked to a wide variety of chronic, irreversible and debilitating illnesses ranging from diabetes, cancer, dementia and respiratory illnesses as well as low birth weight, stunted lung growth and reduced cognitive abilities in babies and children. The UK has one of the highest asthma rates in the world amongst children, despite being the 5th biggest economy in the world.

We are aware that 2019 is going to be a critical year in achieving legislation that is fit to address the public health emergency of air pollution in the short-term as well as in the long-term as Government is preparing Environmental Legislation that will cover clean air. Further, the recent IPCC report has highlighted that huge efforts need to be undertaken between now and 2030 to ensure the world remains a habitable place for our children and grandchildren. However, the Government's lack of response to this emergency, the inappropriate funding of the Clean Air Fund, the unambitious Road to Zero, the draft legislation published pre-Christmas and the more recent Clean Air Strategy clearly show that Government has not understood the level of the air pollution, health or climate crisis and is not willing to address these interlinked issues appropriately. This public health crisis needs to be addressed as a priority, even if other political challenges are to remain in 2019 and beyond.

With this background we therefore urge you in the strongest terms to:

**1) Draft strong legislation to ensure:**

- a. Latest WHO standards become binding as air pollution limits across the UK by 2030. This is enforced by a truly independent watchdog that is not staffed by the Secretary of State, nor dependant on their goodwill for funding, and is able to fine all non-compliant public authorities effectively to an extent that this truly becomes a deterrent, and prohibit contravening actions. The body must also have a duty to investigate complaints that are not clearly frivolous.
- b. Local authorities are provided with the powers to address all sources of air pollution effectively, such as enabling them to react appropriately to moderate and high-pollution forecasts and clamp down on idling near schools as Public Health England recently suggested. Relevant sources must clearly include private and public transport, wood burning, planning and construction, aviation and ports as well as other sources that might not even seem relevant yet or might not yet have been identified.
- c. Other relevant stakeholders such as Highways England and private business are required to collaborate with local authorities.

**2) Ensure local authorities are provided with necessary funds.** Mayors and City Leaders including Sadiq Khan have repeatedly asked for £1.5bn and it appears Secretary of State Michael Gove is supporting this request to the Exchequer. Air pollution currently costs the economy approximately £20bn a year. Government has acknowledged that this cost and the cost to the NHS will only be rising. Considering that The Clean Air Strategy aims to save costs of £1.7bn a year, this investment is economically sound and must be granted now. Local authorities could then also use this to implement local targeted diesel scrappage schemes, which will ease the transition to less polluting modes of transport.

**3) Redraft the Road to Zero and include 2030 as a binding target to phase out the availability of new road transport with combustion engines.** This is technologically

possible, indeed it is inconceivable that whilst Defra is claiming to be drafting world-leading legislation on environmental and clean air standards, the phasing-out date is lacking so clearly behind countries such as Norway, India and France. It is exactly the lack of commitment to the appropriate timeline and process that is hampering and reducing the ambition by business to seize the opportunity and become world-leading in green technology.

4) **Hold companies to account**, such as Volkswagen, which was responsible for cheating on diesel emissions tests. They have been easily convinced to significantly contribute to clean air funds in countries such as Germany. The draft Bill puts forward the “polluter pays principle”, which appears to be lip service from the outset without appropriate measures being enforced against the responsible companies.

A delegation of signees would be keen to meet with you to discuss how we can support your efforts in fighting air pollution effectively as well as your ability to support our proposals and efforts.

We look forward to hearing from you and will be sharing your response with our network and all signees.

Kind regards,