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06-Jun-2021

Dear Keith Hoskins MBE, and Cabinet panel on the Environment,

I am writing to express my desire for our local air pollution problem to be tackled as a matter of priority and to ask that you support an ambitious plan for the council to play its role in making our air cleaner.

I would first like to thank cllr Paul Clark for providing me with the link to the results from the local air station monitoring stations. However it is with considerable concern that I notice that there is no information available for the site at: North Herts Baldock -1, North Herts Baldock -2, North Herts Baldock Roadside, North Herts Breechwood Green, North Herts Hitchin Library, North Herts Royston – all of these are showing as “Closed” and no results available.

Is there a reason why so many monitoring stations are not being used? As with the problem of Microplastics first not even known of, and now found even in bottled water and commercial drinks (even in cans) so it is with Air pollution, one will never know how bad and extensive the problem is until we look for it everywhere and quantify it. It could be seen as a way to avoid reporting and having to address the air pollution problem, by deliberately not having working stations, and measuring it, and thus not having to address the results found. My question to the NHDC Cabinet panel on the Environment is – can all these air monitoring stations be brought into use immediately? Also, why are Ozone (O₃) and Sulphur Dioxide (SO₂) not being monitored?

I am a resident and worry what impact air pollution has on my health, my husband’s health who has been an asthmatic all his life, and the health of the children and adults in our community. The World Health Organisation and the UK Government recognise that air pollution is the largest environmental health risk we face today. It causes heart and lung diseases, is linked to low birth weight and children’s lung development and may even contribute to mental health issues, impacting on brain development (PM2.5 particulates are known to get into and be deposited in the brain) and so also their ability to learn.

Right now, clean air has never been more important as we recover from the pandemic and look to secure the health of future generations. As we are allowed to increase activity in our lives, we must take this opportunity to acknowledge the reality of Air Pollution as a real problem that exists everywhere including in the North Herts area, that Air pollution like all pollutions knows no borders, and take bold steps to create a healthy environment for our children where they can learn and play safely, and all can lead healthier lives.

I noticed that NHDC has been a “supporting organisation” of the Clean Air Day project from its beginning, yet as a local resident I have never seen nor been aware of any local campaign efforts, to raise awareness among the local population, businesses, and organisations.

I hope the council will have people working on this issue, and that there will be a plan to address air pollution. I would like to show my support for urgent actions to be taken to improve local air quality, like:

- Requiring of every supermarket car park installing electric car charge points for 20 cars by the end of 2021.

- Not issuing taxi licenses to internal combustion engines car holders any more at all, and not renewing old licences.
- Require British Rail to install electric car charge points in the taxi rank areas, in 2021/2022.
- NHDC install electric car charge points in all the taxi rank areas, in 2021/2022.
- Require all North Herts area schools to install 6 to 12 electric car charging points for the staff, depending on size, to facilitate the staff to replace their cars with electric vehicles, and set a good example for their pupils, who will only have electric cars when they grow up.
- Ban the use of petrol engine children's novelty town trains by any organisation or charity raising funds by selling rides – these should all be only done by electric vehicles, since the engines exhaust fumes are expelled at children's head height, most dangerous!
- Ban the use of petrol and diesel generators to run food and activity vans for town events, where so many people are milling around close by breathing air that gets increasingly polluted as the day progresses.
- Have a time line for all local buses to be changed to electric or Hydrogen buses, so that their exhaust gases will stop polluting our town and is most damaging to those waiting at bus stops, who stand so very close to or walk past the source of the polluted air.
- Look at re-designing where possible road layouts so that dedicated cycle lanes are added that can be used for bicycles and motorised scooters (as they will become permitted in time) but these lanes must have protected status of NO parking allowed on them.
- Make all garden waste collection free of charge and sell the compost generated from it as Peat-Free alternative. Even if this will cost the council money, it is an investment in improving local air quality and could be financed by enforcement of banning the burning of garden waste, to completely discourage the use of bonfires in resident's gardens. Whatever happened to "Ace-of-Hearts" compost, I could buy in the past, and can't find now?

And lastly, the implementation of a real **No Idling Policy** across the NHDC area, the law already exists, but it needs to be communicated to all in NHDC area, and implemented. An idling engine can produce up to twice the emissions of a car in motion - including sulphur dioxide, particulate matter and nitrogen oxide. Stationary idling is an offence under section 42 of the Road Traffic Act which enforces rule 123 of the Highway Code "**You must not leave a vehicle's engine running unnecessarily while that vehicle is stationary on a public road**". The fine can be up to £120. NHDC could enforce an idling ban and earn some income through the fines.

References: <https://www.confused.com/on-the-road/driving-law/fines-for-idling> and <https://pro-TECT-solutions.com/free-example-environmental-and-engine-idling-policy-template/>

Please could the education extend in particular to all public service staff, such as utilities workers, settle housing, etc., and could they be educated and monitored on idling, as council vans and people linked to the council have been seen idling on a regular basis – a real waste of money to the council in wasted fuel.

It would be great to see clear 'Engine Off' signage outside schools and in supermarket car parks making it clear that idling while you wait is not acceptable. Local school children could design them, I am certain!

With this letter, I include in Appendix-A graphs collected for the only site in Hitchin that has results available, for information on the WHO recommended pollution limits, see: [https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/ambient-\(outdoor\)-air-quality-and-health](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/ambient-(outdoor)-air-quality-and-health)

And attach the Clean Air Day campaign information leaflet, which I hope the council will promote widely, in the run-up to Clean Air Day on Thursday 17th June, and beyond! Thank you

May I recommend a series of planned events on the day: <https://www.cleanairday.org.uk/events>
in particular the webinar: <https://www.cleanairday.org.uk/businesses-new-responsibility>
and the All Party parliamentary Group webinar: <https://www.cleanairday.org.uk/appg-air-pollution>

Air pollution is not a fact of life. If we all do our bit, we could have clean air. I therefore support the council's plans to bring a swift end to our unhealthy air pollution levels, and the ambition to make North Herts a "Clean Air Zone" (CAZ) to be proud of, as a gift of hope to all its residents and visitors.

May I ask how quickly these suggestions to solve our air pollution problem will be implemented?
It would be good to see posters, leaflets, and even radio announcements detailing the impacts of air pollution on public health, to raise awareness. The info needs to be more hard hitting and urgent, as Clean Air Day is just the beginning of a healthier life time, not just for one day a year!

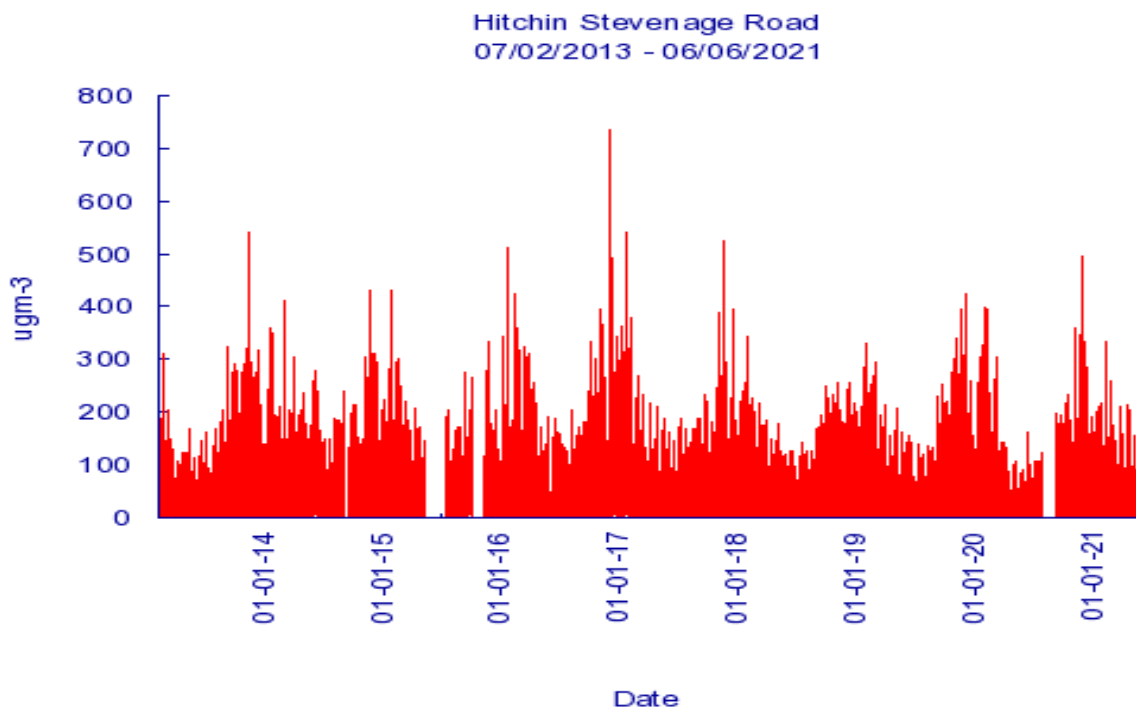
If there are things that I can do to help clean up our air, please do let me know.

Yours faithfully,

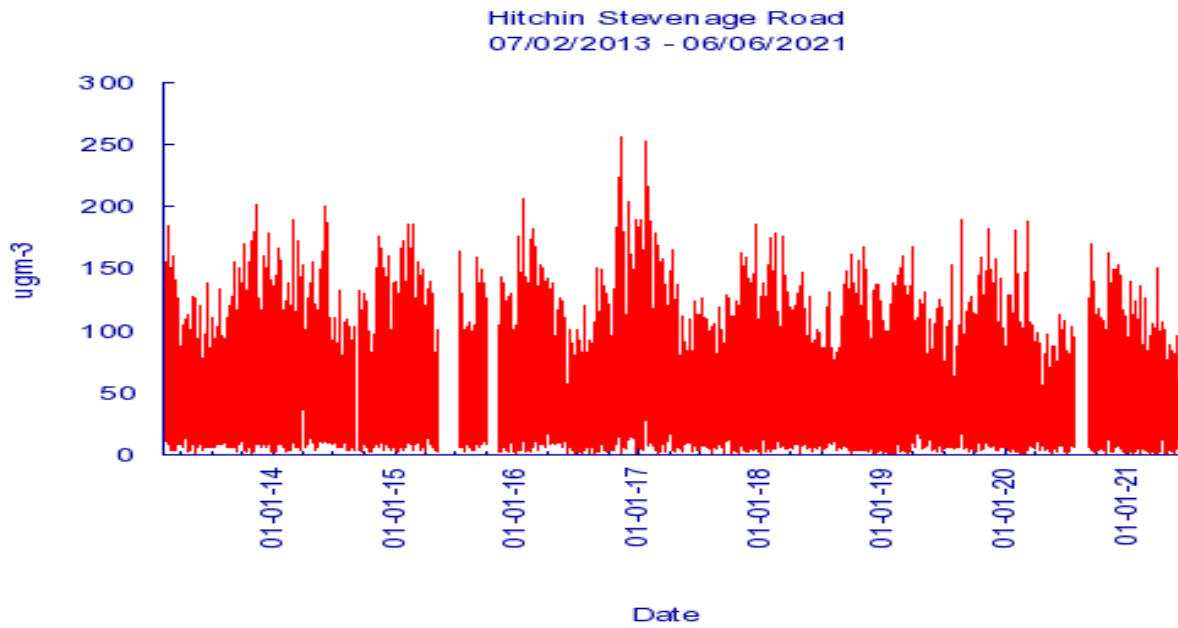
Deolinda Eltringham

Appendix-A: 8 years Pollution graphs

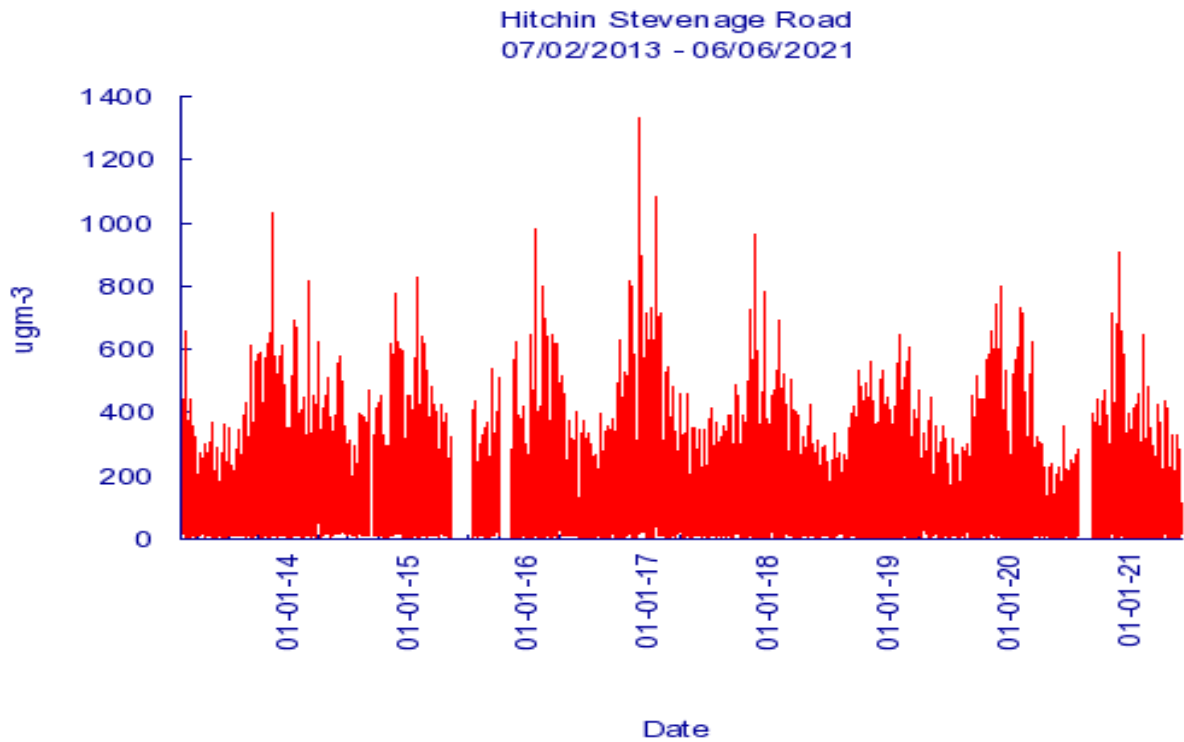
Nitric Oxide (NO₂) - WHO guideline values: 40 µg/m³ annual mean and 200 µg/m³ 1-hour mean



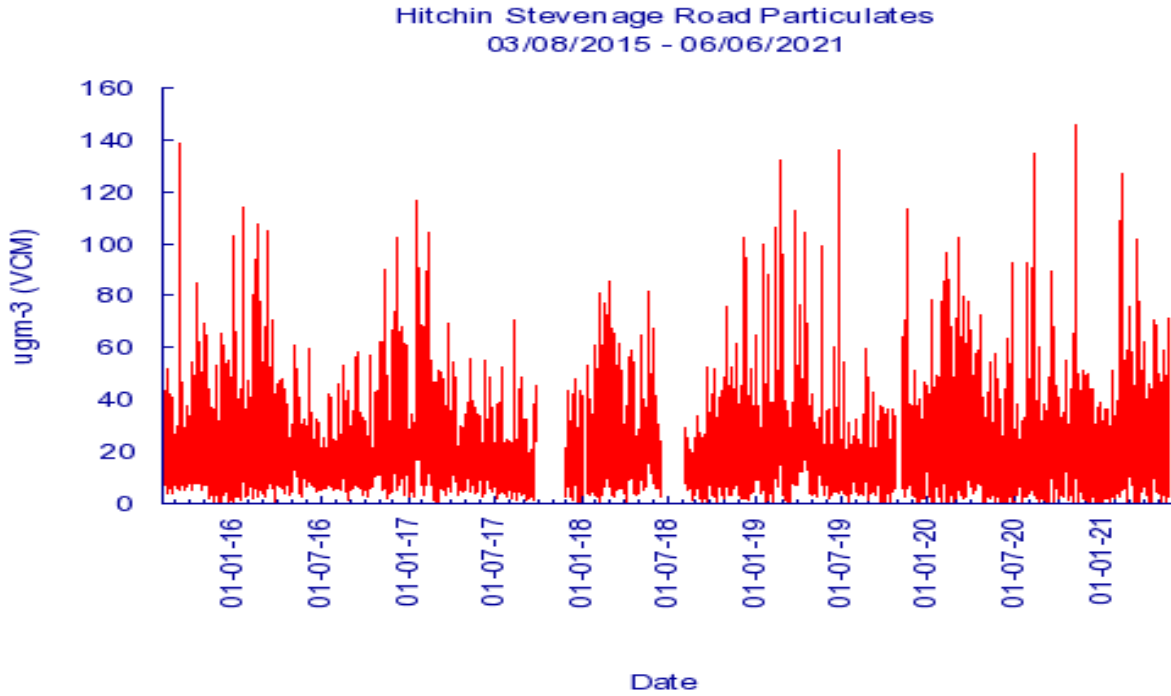
Nitrogen Dioxide:



Nitrogen oxides as Nitrogen Dioxide:



PM10 particulate matter (hourly measured) - WHO guideline values: 20 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ annual mean and 50 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ 24-hour mean



PM2.5 particulate matter (hourly measured)) - WHO guideline values: 10 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ annual mean and 25 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ 24-hour mean

