

## **What else should Leeds City Council do to improve air quality?**

### **Alex Sobel, Member of Parliament for Leeds North West**

#### **Create a separate Clean Air Zone for Pool**

1. I am pleased that the Clean Air Zone is planned to be extended to the outer ring road which will, I believe, deter heavy vehicles from using the A660 corridor to get into the city centre. It is imperative, however, for the clean air zone to reflect that Leeds is a city made up of many communities. Every resident living in our city deserves to breathe clean air. It is therefore, only reasonable for a Clean Air Zone to be established in communities outside of the existing circle when there is a clear case for doing so.
2. The clearest case in the constituency that I represent is Pool in Wharfedale. The monitoring station on Main Street has shown consistently high NO<sub>2</sub> levels, with a reading of 60µg/m<sup>3</sup> in 2016, 20 above the EU limit. St. Wilfred's terrace has also shown consistently high readings, with an annualised reading of 45µg/m<sup>3</sup> in 2016. What these results clearly show is that residents in Pool are breathing air as bad as anything that we see within Leeds City Centre and decisive action must be taken. In my view, this action should be nothing short of a Clean Air Zone for Pool.

#### **Review the location of existing NO<sub>2</sub> monitoring stations**

3. There is much concern in Otley around air quality, particularly as there is an obvious traffic problem with standing traffic in many areas but especially over the bridge that connects the two sides of the town. Readings show levels that are just within EU limits (though still above WHO limits). However, these readings are taken from Bradford Road and Westgate, two areas that have heavy traffic flow but that do not resemble the severity of the traffic coming from Billams Hill and over the bridge into the centre of town. I would therefore request a review into the placement of the monitoring stations with a view to future action if the readings come back with the severe results that we all suspect.

#### **Increase monitoring of particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub> and PM<sub>10</sub>)**

4. While Leeds City Council has 111 monitoring stations for NO<sub>2</sub>, there are currently just three monitoring stations for particulate matter.
5. Particulate matter is a complex mixture of solids and liquids, including carbon, sulphates and nitrates suspended in the air. The smaller particles are known as PM<sub>2.5</sub> and PM<sub>10</sub> and are produced through industrial processes, emissions from

diesel and petrol engines, friction from brakes and tyres, and dust from road surfaces. Diesel engines tend to produce much more than equivalent petrol engines.

6. There is significant evidence that particulate matter is damaging to health. According to the British Lung Foundation, long-term exposure to particulate matter can contribute to the development of lung cancer and asthma. Research funded by the British Heart Foundation at the University of Edinburgh has also shown a strong link between PM and cardiovascular conditions including stroke and heart attack. Outdoor air pollution contributes to an estimated 40,000 premature deaths in the UK each year. Globally, cardiovascular disease accounts for an estimated 80% of all such premature deaths.
7. Despite this, the government's focus on air quality to date has been on the health-harms from NO<sub>2</sub>, as current EU and domestic legislation deem the UK, excluding Scotland, to be in breach of NO<sub>2</sub> levels only. With the exception of Scotland, the UK's current legal limits for PM are much less stringent than those recommended by the WHO. The UK has adopted the EU limits for both PM<sub>2.5</sub> and PM<sub>10</sub>.

**Table 1 - Leeds City Council PM<sub>2.5</sub> monitoring results, LAQM Annual Status Report 2017**

	PM <sub>2.5</sub> Annual Mean Concentration (µg/m <sup>3</sup> )						
Site ID	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	UK/EU limits* <sup>1</sup>	WHO limits* <sup>2</sup>
A3 (Headingley)	17	n/a	14	13	11	25	10

**Table 2 - Leeds City Council PM<sub>10</sub> monitoring results, LAQM Annual Status Report 2017**

	PM <sub>10</sub> Annual Mean Concentration (µg/m <sup>3</sup> )						
Site ID	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	UK/EU limits* <sup>1</sup>	WHO limits* <sup>2</sup>
A3 (Headingley)	22	22	23	18	19	40	20

<sup>1</sup> Source: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/air/quality/standards.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Source: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs313/en/>

8. Table 1 clearly shows that the data capture for the existing monitoring site based in Leeds North West has exceeded WHO guidelines for PM<sub>2.5</sub> limits every year since records began. Table 2 indicates that although the data capture does not currently exceed the limits, there was an excess from 2012-2014. The high level of PM<sub>10</sub> captured in 2015 and 2016 indicates that there may be other parts of the city that are in breach of PM<sub>10</sub> guidelines.
9. Thousands of people living in Leeds have cardiovascular and respiratory conditions. According to the British Heart Foundation, an estimated 11,900 people live with long-term cardiovascular disease in Leeds North West alone – 10% of the population. The British Lung Foundation estimates that a further 5,600 people live with asthma and 1,300 with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).
10. Given the significant number of people living with cardiovascular and respiratory conditions in Leeds North West and the likelihood of their exposure to air pollution in the city – particularly the harmful PM emissions produced by diesel vehicles – it is imperative that Leeds City Council works to improve its monitoring of PM in the constituency. There has been reticence within authorities across the country to effectively monitor PM<sub>2.5</sub> levels in particular, as the equipment needed to do so is costly. However, it has been estimated that the health implications of air pollution amount nationally to £20billion/year. Effective monitoring of particulate matter could help to reduce the health impact of air pollution.

#### **Adopt WHO limits for PM<sub>2.5</sub> and PM<sub>10</sub>**

11. Scotland has adopted WHO limits into existing legislation as an ambition. Oxford City Council and Oxfordshire County Council have committed to introduced the world's first Zero Emission Zone in Oxford City Centre, which will see diesel and petrol vehicles banned from Oxford City Centre, cutting nitrogen dioxide in the city centre's most polluted street by 74% by 2035.<sup>3</sup> In recognition that the UK's current limits for PM are unsafe, the Greater London Authority and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority have committed to achieve the WHO limits by 2030.
12. While other authorities are moving towards adopting WHO limits for PM, no other local authority has yet committed to doing so. I would welcome Leeds City Council becoming the first local authority to adopt WHO limits for PM.

#### **Create new incentives for public adoption of electric vehicles**

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<sup>3</sup> Source:

[https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20216/air\\_quality\\_management/1227/oxford\\_zero\\_emission\\_zone\\_zez](https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20216/air_quality_management/1227/oxford_zero_emission_zone_zez)

13. I am pleased with the incentives that LCC are recommending taxi drivers receive to encourage them to adopt electric vehicles. More incentives could be looked into and I would encourage the council to look into licencing costs and whether anything could be done to further incentives drivers. I would also like to see the council continue to look at city centre parking to see what incentives could be introduced to encourage electric vehicle purchase. I would like to see the city introduce a City Centre Car Parking Levy taking an example from Nottingham - <http://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/transport-parking-and-streets/parking-and-permits/workplace-parking-levy/> with exemptions from the levy for spaces with EV Charge Points reserved for Electric Vehicles.
14. Other than cost, one of the biggest barriers to electric car purchase in my constituency is the lack of infrastructure. At the time of writing, we don't have a single public charge point in Leeds North West. The council should issue statutory planning guidance to make it should be compulsory for new car parks and petrol stations to have EV Charge points – The new Garage in Adel has no mandated charge points, plans panel could have mandated it but chose not to. This needs to go in the guidance.
15. Infrastructure is a barrier to a cleaner bus fleet too. First Bus have informed me that a large reason for choosing electric 6 diesel buses as opposed to a fully electric fleet is that there just aren't the charging facilities within the city that would be able to handle the capacity needed to provide the same level of service to the city. I would ask that the council consider this carefully and look at ways of incentivising bus providers to move towards fully electric fleets.

**Monitor emerging research and evidence on domestic burning of house coal, smokeless coal, manufactured solid fuel and wet wood**

16. The government has recently launched a consultation into the use of solid fuels such as house coal, manufactured solid fuel and wood for domestic heating. The government's long-term strategy is to see households move away from these polluting fuels towards cleaner technologies.
17. Domestic burning of house coal, smokeless solid fuels and wood is the single largest source of harmful particulate matter emissions in the UK, at around 40% of the total in 2015. Burning the following domestic solid fuels leads to emission of PM<sub>2.5</sub>.<sup>4</sup>
18. I am keen to ensure that we monitor evidence that comes out of this consultation. Nonetheless, I am also keen that any future initiatives to support personal

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<sup>4</sup> Source: <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/airquality/domestic-burning-of-wood-and-coal/>

behavioural changes towards domestic burning of solid fuels in Leeds should not come at the cost of wider, city-wide infrastructural initiatives to reduce PM<sub>2.5</sub> emissions from transport.

### **Improve cycling infrastructure**

19. By far the biggest way to reduce pollution caused by vehicles is to encourage alternative modes of transport. The Tour de France in 2014 brought out a passion for cycling in the area that has shown the potential for cycling, not just as a spot, but also as a way of life. The A660 is a popular route for cyclists but there are not cycle paths that expand between Adel and Otley- this means that there is an increased danger to cycling in that area and a disincentive for cycling as a commute.
20. It is also important for the city to look at other ways of incentivising cycle commuting. This could include encouraging Leeds City Council workplaces to provide showering facilities as well as looking at ways to increase cycle security in the city centre.
21. We must also review our communications for encouraging greater uptake of cycling in the city, helping to ensure the people of Leeds understand the environmental benefits of cycling as well as the health benefits.

### **Bring Forward Rail improvements**

22. The proposed Bramhope Parkway Station is important, not just for those using Leeds/Bradford Airport, but for those who use the A660 to commute to and from Leeds City Centre. The urgent need to reduce the traffic from the A660 corridor and the subsequent improvements to air quality provides a strong case for bringing forward the completion date of the station from 2023 to 2021. This is in line with the airport's own recommendations.

### **Press the Government for proper funding.**

23. I accept that many of the above recommendations will cost the council money and I am aware of the wider financial context in which Leeds City Council exists. I would therefore urge the council to lobby national government for the money that it needs to put the above recommendations, as well as the existing proposal, in place. For my part, I will use my position as a member of Parliament to put pressure on the government to do the same.