

## **Motion from Bath and North East Somerset Liberal Democrats**

This motion recognises that by reducing air pollution in B&NES we may be able to reduce residents' risk of respiratory diseases, heart disease, and lung cancer.

It also recognises that no one single agency, government department or community has all the answers; improvements to air quality can only be achieved by taking a nationally integrated, collaborative approach. It acknowledges that economic growth and improving the local environment are not mutually exclusive. The Government has advised local authorities to bear in mind the synergies between air quality and climate change, and the benefits of having an integrated approach to economic development, housing and tackling climate change and air quality objectives.

Nevertheless, it is the UK government that is responsible for implementation of clean air laws and remains the major source of finance for clean air policy, both for national policies and through the funding of local authorities. The government's Localism Act sought to transfer more responsibility for air quality from central government to local authorities, especially attempting to make them potentially liable for a share of EU fines, but has failed to give Local Authorities the power they need.

B&NES Council's report on air pollution source apportionment shows that road traffic contributes up to 92% of the total NO<sub>2</sub> concentration, with Heavy Duty Vehicles (HDV's, lorries, buses and coaches) contributing between 24 and 57.1%.

We therefore call on Central Government to give Local Government greater powers to influence polluters in their areas. It is unacceptable that councils outside London have no ability to influence the air quality in relation to major transport routes since this falls to the Highways Agency. This limits our ambition to respond to residents' concerns when developing a Transport Strategy for Bath

As host to the UK's only World Heritage City, we request the same powers as London to manage traffic flow and to decriminalize certain moving traffic offences. We also demand that the Highways Agency develops a strategy for the A46/A36 that does not direct HGVs and other traffic through the city of Bath, thus contributing to the serious air quality problems within the city.

In addition we request that

1. The Department for Transport and DEFRA should continue to support developing a wider network of Low Emissions Zones to cut emissions in locations where limit values for NO<sub>2</sub> are being breached, piloting in B&NES if found viable and in breach.
2. B&NES are permitted to test differentiated parking permit charges based on emission of vehicles.
3. B&NES is allowed to pilot a Berlin-type system in their city, where cars have to display colour-coded visible road tax permits based on the emissions levels (where, for example, a low polluting car would display a green sticker and high polluting one a red).
4. More central government funding is made available to reduce the NO<sub>2</sub> emissions from buses by retrofitting buses with SCRT pollution filtering systems. While welcoming the £5 million Clean Vehicle Technology Fund made available to local authorities to bid for across England and make improvements to local bus fleets, we do not feel this is sufficient funding to make the impact needed.
5. Central government funding is made available to provide incentives to clean up the emissions of local taxis as the highest mileage urban vehicles.
6. Greater regulation of Bus Fares, to encourage modal change.

7. Financial support be made available for improved walking and cycling routes as an alternatives to the motor car

8. Diesel vehicles are subject to the same small surcharge under Vehicle Excise Duty as they are under the Company Car Tax. This would help ameliorate the current, arguably perverse, encouragement of diesel vehicles and bring consistency to the treatment of private and company cars.

9. Smoke control and air quality management rules should not be weakened as government attempts to promote renewable energy in homes and businesses, and if necessary should be strengthened to ensure that local authorities have discretion to determine whether biomass installations are right for their area.

B&NES council has been proactive in attempting to deal with the problem of poor air quality. It is time for the government to take a bold and radical approach to cutting pollution by giving councils greater influence over polluters in their areas and investing to save taxpayers from footing these huge health bills in the future.

Government needs to give local communities the powers to implement traffic management measures and the finance to ensure that economically those areas are not disadvantaged, by offering alternatives to polluting vehicles.

Cllr Nigel Roberts