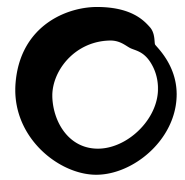


Air pollution in Scotland



**Friends of
the Earth
Scotland**

Air pollution in many parts of Scotland is breaking legal limits and putting public health at risk.

The worst affected areas are Glasgow, Dundee, Edinburgh and Aberdeen, but in total there are 14 Councils which have declared a total 32 “Pollution Zones”, that is, designated streets or areas where levels of air pollution are breaking safety standards.

Why is air pollution a problem?

Air pollution can trigger heart attacks, strokes, and asthma attacks, and is also a cause of lung cancer. Air pollution (at the levels we are seeing in parts of Scotland) can lead to babies being born with low birthweights, prevent children’s lungs developing to their maximum capacity, and has more recently been linked with autism in children.

We estimate that in Scotland, over 2000 people every year die early from exposure to air pollution. That’s more than 10 times the number of people dying in road crashes. Air pollution is like passive smoking in the sense that poor air quality is inflicted upon us.

There was a European legal deadline of 2010 for countries to achieve safe air quality levels across all areas, and this deadline was broken and continues to be broken in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, and Dundee. In April 2015 the UK Supreme Court ruled that levels of air pollution across the UK including in Scotland were illegal and ordered that immediate action be taken to fix the problem. Scotland was ordered to draw up a new Air Quality Plan before the end of this year to show how it will meet legal limits. The Scottish Government promises that its recently published “Cleaner Air for Scotland” Strategy will deliver the the legal limits.

Who is affected?

Everyone is affected by air pollution: it shaves an average of 7-8 months off of everybody’s life expectancy in the UK. But people living in urban areas and close to busy roads breathe in higher levels of pollution.

Children are affected worse than others because their lungs are smaller and are still developing. People with breathing and heart conditions are affected more than others, as well as the elderly, and people living in poverty.

That is why air pollution is a social justice issue as well as an environmental issue.

How can we reduce air pollution?

80% of urban pollution comes from traffic: fumes pumped out by cars, lorries, and buses contain toxic gases and particles which can damage health.

So the Government and local councils must reduce traffic volumes and improve vehicle emissions standards to save lives and protect health. They must:

- (1) Introduce a network of Low Emission Zones in Scottish Cities by 2018: Low Emission Zones are areas in city centres where the most polluting vehicles are banned or must pay a fine if they enter. They have been shown to reduce pollution in many European cities and there is even one in London, which is soon to be upgraded, but as yet there are none in Scotland. Glasgow City Council has promised a Low Emission Zone on and off, but has never introduced one.
- (2) Get people walking and cycling: In Copenhagen, 36% of trips are by bike; the Scottish average is under 2%, and a big barrier is that there are not enough proper cycle paths and so people don’t feel safe and welcome to cycle. The Scottish Government and local Councils must spend at least 10% of their transport budgets on active travel (at the moment, less than 2% of the national transport budget is spent on walking and cycling);
- (3) Improve Public Transport: Buses and trains are very much part of the solution to air pollution – for every person on a bus, that is potentially one less car on the road, meaning less congestion and less pollution overall. The Government needs to introduce an integrated

ticketing system so you can use one ticket for all journeys made by public transport.

As well as saving hundreds of lives, which is the urgent priority, improving transport can also:

- (1) Tackle climate change: at the moment, the transport sector makes up a quarter of Scotland's total greenhouse gas emissions, and that proportion is gradually rising, not falling. Scotland is not meeting its Climate Change targets so tackling transport will help it.
- (2) Help the economy and the NHS: The cost of air pollution to the Scottish economy, in terms of days lost at work and costs to the NHS, could be as much as £2billion every year. Spending more money on tackling air pollution would therefore pay for itself.
- (3) Boost active lifestyles: Scotland has one of the worst rates of obesity in Europe (although air pollution kills ten times more people than obesity). If there were more (and better) cycle paths, then people would be able to make healthier lifestyle choices.

What is Friends of the Earth Scotland doing about air pollution?

We are:

- Making the Government publicly accountable through strong media pressure: We publish regular data showing what the levels of air pollution are looking like in Scotland. For four years running we have revealed Scotland's most polluted streets in January, showing that pollution levels were well over the legal limits in many Scottish streets, with Edinburgh's St John's Road Scotland's most polluted streets.
- Pushing for the strongest possible delivery of "Cleaner Air for Scotland". In November 2015 the Scottish Government published a new clean air plan. We are pushing for that plan to be strengthened by committing to Low Emission Zones by 2018, through lobbying, media work, and extensive discussions with key architects of the plan.

We want the plan to have funding attached to it to support local councils to implement strong measures to tackle air pollution.

- Changing local transport strategies: We successfully lobbied for clean air to be included as a key objective in Edinburgh Council's Local Transport Strategy. Glasgow Council's City Centre Transport Strategy now talks a lot more about improving air quality, but there is room for improvement.
- Measuring pollution levels for ourselves: We did our own analysis of air pollution levels in Glasgow to reveal that traffic levels really do affect air pollution.

We're campaigning for clean air using a range of tactics, from meeting with Councillors, through to collecting petition signatures, through to standing on Scotland's most polluted street and posing in gas masks. Staff, our members, and volunteers and members of the public have all participated to make this happen.

What can I do about it?

- Contact your MSPs and local Councillors to let them know about your concerns. You can find out who they are and their contact details at <https://www.writetothem.com>. You may wish to say if you live or work in a Pollution Zone, and how you feel personally affected.
- You can find out whether you live in a declared Pollution Zone by visiting <http://www.scottishairquality.co.uk/laqm/aqma>
- If you are worried about how air pollution is affecting your health, then you can sign up to the Government's "Know and Respond" service to receive alerts about when air pollution is high: www.scottishairquality.co.uk for more details.
- Subscribe to Friends of the Earth Scotland's air pollution mailing list for regular campaign updates and ways to get involved: foes.do/1ENXLQZ