

Low Emission Zone Briefing

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**Friends of
the Earth
Scotland**

What is a Low Emission Zone?

A Low Emission Zone (LEZ) is a defined area where access by the most polluting vehicles is restricted or deterred with the aim of improving the air quality.

Why do we need LEZs in Scotland?

We have a right to breathe clean air, yet we have toxic air pollution in Scotland which is causing an invisible public health crisis. Levels of air pollution are breaking Scottish health standards in 38 Pollution Zones across the country.

European legal limits on nitrogen dioxide concentrations which were due to have been met in 2010 are being broken in large parts of Glasgow, Dundee, Aberdeen, Perth, and Edinburgh.

As a result of exposure to traffic-related pollution, around 2500 people every year in Scotland are dying early. Pollution plays a major role in cancer, strokes, heart attacks, asthma, dementia, diabetes, babies being born prematurely and/or with reduced birth weights, and children's lungs not developing to their full potential.

It is those who are least responsible for causing the problem that are often worst impacted: children and people living in poverty.

We need a transport system which is fairer and cleaner. In our urban areas, we need to keep the most polluting vehicles out of the most polluted places, which is exactly what LEZs can achieve. While LEZs may not be enough to secure air quality that is fully compliant with safety standards, they are a major piece in the puzzle of transport policies that the Scottish Government must introduce to safeguard our right to clean air.

Do LEZs exist anywhere else? How do they work?

There are over 200 LEZs across Europe, with over 70 in Germany, but there are many different ways to introduce and implement an LEZ with differing levels of success. Most require vehicles to meet a certain Euro standard, which define the acceptable limits for exhaust emissions of new vehicles sold in EU and are increasingly stringent. The VW scandal showed that not all vehicles are performing to their claimed Euro standards, which is why we are

calling for the Scottish Government to closely monitor how and whether Euro standards are being achieved as part of its LEZ rollout.

Berlin's LEZ, first introduced in 2008, achieved a 58% overall reduction in emissions of fine particles in the first three years. It applied a Euro 4 emission standard to all diesel vehicles including cars. Motorists have to display a sticker on their windows showing their vehicle's Euro standard, and if they do not have a Euro 4 sticker and are discovered in the zone have to pay a fine of €80, which is enforced by wardens.

London has had a LEZ since 2008 which covers a large area of inner and Greater London, and applies vehicle restrictions to buses, lorries, and vans. If these vehicles are found within the zone with the wrong emissions standard they must pay a fine of £200 which is enforced by the police using automatic number plate recognition technology. The London LEZ is due to apply to cars within a smaller area (the same area as London's congestion charge) from next year. That area will then widen to cover a larger area which spans all the way to the north circular from 2021.

What kind of LEZ do we need for Scottish cities, and where?

We want to see:

- LEZs in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Dundee, and Perth as soon as possible. These are all cities which have ongoing illegal levels of pollution and with large populations who are exposed to unsafe toxic air every day.
- buses, vans, and lorries to be included initially in the zones, with taxis and cars included later
- the emissions standard to be set at Euro 6
- enforcement to be via automatic number plate recognition technology, so that in the future, a possible congestion charge could be applied using the same equipment.
- the area of the zones to encompass all areas with regular breaches of air quality safety standards
- the Scottish Government to support buses to upgrade their fleets with help from the Green Bus Fund so that buses are not forced to increase fares or reduce services in order to comply with the zones
- The Scottish Government to make funding available to councils to introduce the zones

How close are LEZs to being delivered in Scotland?

- In 2016 the Scottish Government promised to deliver Scotland's first LEZ by 2018, working closely with a local authority

- Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Perth & Kinross Councils have all expressed an interest in introducing an LEZ in their most polluted areas
- The Scottish Government's "Cleaner Air for Scotland" Governance Group is tasked with assisting the delivery of Scotland's first LEZ, however, progress to date has been very slow.
- Arrangements over where the first zone will be, what legal basis the zone will have, and how it will be funded have yet to be disclosed by the Scottish Government
- The Scottish Government is still only promising one LEZ in Scotland, in spite of on-going pressure on it to comply with European air quality obligations as soon as possible
- Through participation on the Scottish Government's Cleaner Air for Scotland Governance Group, where Friends of the Earth Scotland represents Scottish Environment Link, we are working to keep pressure on the Scottish Government to deliver on its moral and legal obligations to protect our health through LEZs as soon as possible.

How you can help see LEZs to fruition

If you live in Glasgow, Aberdeen, Edinburgh, or Perth then your Council has expressed a willingness to explore introducing an LEZ in your city in the last year.

Contact your Councillors to tell them you want an LEZ, and ask them to progress the development of an LEZ. Find out which committees are tasked with taking this on.

You might also consider contacting your local media by writing them a letter about why an LEZ is a good idea in your area.

If you want any more advice on how LEZs might work in your area or how you can support their development locally, contact our air pollution campaigner Emilia on ehanna@foe-scotland.org.uk

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