

Low Emission Zones

Parliamentary Briefing ahead of debate on the ECCLR Committee's air quality report 17th April

Key points in tackling Scotland's illegal air pollution

1. Air pollution is still killing off around 2,500 people a year in Scotland and we are not on track to meet the Scottish Government's target of clean air by 2020.
2. Top priority must be making sure that Scotland's first Low Emission Zone, to open in Glasgow at the end of this year, is as effective as possible. A very recent commitment of Scottish Government cash means that the current lacklustre proposals can be made much more ambitious before they are finalised in a month or two. Glasgow must set a good example or it will endanger the ambition of the LEZs to follow by 2020 in Aberdeen, Dundee and Edinburgh.
3. For Scotland's Low Emission Zones to be a success, emissions from buses, vans, lorries, cars, and taxis must **all** be cleaned up in urban centres as quickly as possible. In Glasgow, this means that within a year, all buses running through the city centre should be Euro VI compliant, and other vehicles should be included in the zone as soon as possible thereafter.
4. Low Emission Zones must be supported by other policies, including Road User Charging, which bring about modal shift away from the private car and towards more sustainable modes, namely, walking, cycling and public transport.

ECCLR Committee inquiry

The ECCLR Committee conducted an in depth inquiry into air quality, including looking at whether the Cleaner Air for Scotland strategy was being delivered, the implementation of Low Emission Zones and progress towards the Scottish Government's target of air quality meeting European standards by 2020. [1]

The Committee's report questions the lack of urgency of action and calls for more rapid delivery on the ground if the Scottish Government is to make progress on its 2020 goal.

Key recommendations in the Committee's report:

- For LEZs to best contribute to improvements in air quality in their respective areas, cars should be included
- Congestion charging and workplace parking levies may also help to improve air quality and the Committee recommends that the Scottish Government explore these options following the introduction of the LEZs.
- To meet air quality and wider climate change targets, increasing the number of journeys by bike to 10% and beyond is necessary

There are over 200 Low Emission Zones in Europe including one in London which has been running for a decade and an even stricter Ultra Low Emission Zone will come into force there next year. [2]

Key developments since the publication of the ECCLR Report:

16 March: Glasgow City Council published weak Low Emission Zone plans, which would only apply to 20% of buses by the end of 2018, with no signs to show the zone exists and no cameras to catch offenders, and other vehicles not impacted by the LEZ until December 2021. The plans would almost certainly guarantee continued illegal levels of air pollution in Glasgow

by 2020, failing to deliver the clean air that is legally required in the city and failing to deliver on SNP national and local manifesto commitments for a functioning LEZ to be in place by the end of this year. [3]

20 March: at Glasgow City Council's Environment, Sustainability and Carbon Reduction City Policy Committee opposition Councillors successfully backed a Labour amendment to bring forward the date by which all vehicles will be included within the LEZ to April 2021, but phasing out dirty buses would still take more than 4 years. The lack of ambition in these plans is in large part results from Transport Scotland's unwillingness to clarify funding arrangements and legal mechanisms around the delivery of LEZs. The Glasgow Committee also backed the introduction of Road User Charging by the end of 2020. Congestion charging is one example of Road User Charging.

23 March: Scottish Environment LINK resigned from the Cleaner Air for Scotland Governance Group on 23 March, citing their disappointment in and frustration around the Group's lack of progress in tackling unsafe levels of air pollution, and poor input into Glasgow's draft Low Emission Zone plans as key reasons. [4]

29 March: The Scottish Government clarified that of the £10.8m funding in 2018/19 made available for LEZs, "over 70% [i.e. over £7.6m] ... will support the bus industry in Glasgow to prepare for LEZs." The average cost of a bus retrofit is £17,000, so this money would allow for the retrofit of at least 440 buses, meaning that 75% of the fleet could be meeting or beating Euro VI standards by the spring of 2019.

Detailed recommendations in relation to Glasgow's Low Emission Zone

The City Council will agree the final LEZ plans before the summer recess. This gives just a month or two to very significantly strengthen the scheme from the current weak proposals.

a. Buses should be part of the solution to air pollution and stakeholders must work together to use available funds and technology to clean up the dirtiest buses

Under current draft plans, no cars, vans, taxis, or lorries, will be impacted by the Zone until up to April 2021, and only 20% of buses will be required to be Euro VI standard by the end of the year. Between 10-15% of Glasgow buses were *already* Euro VI in 2017, so this could see as little as 5%, or 40 buses, required to be retrofitted this year.

The £7.6m that the Scottish Government has made available for this financial year is enough to cover 100% of the costs of retrofitting over 440 more polluting buses to the latest Euro VI standard. The technology is simple, it takes under a day to retrofit a bus, and there are several companies operating in the UK who specialise in bus retrofits. Figures from Transport Scotland show that even a simple set up could retrofit 500 buses in a year. If Glasgow City Council and bus companies are prepared to invest some of their own funds, 100% of the 800 or so buses running through Glasgow City Centre could meet the Euro VI standard within a year.

b. Other vehicles should be included in Low Emission Zones as early as possible

SEPA modelling has shown that even if all buses are Euro VI compliant, there will still be illegal air quality in Glasgow. To have meaningful and successful Low Emission Zones, all other vehicles: taxis, cars, lorries, and vans, need to be included in all LEZs.

Low Emission Zones must be supported by other policies which bring about modal shift away from the private car and towards more sustainable modes, namely, public transport and active travel.

The Cleaner Air For Scotland strategy has fallen behind its own stated timetables in the delivery of its other transport policies. The Scottish Government must adopt policies which support more people to walk, cycle, use public transport and move away from fossil-fuelled vehicles. It must:

- Continue to increase the amount it is investing in walking and cycling until such funding reaches 10% of the transport budget, as called for by Transport Scotland's Cycling Action Plan for Scotland
- Re-regulate the buses, with options for franchise and public ownership models, to give local authorities more control over bus services so that they operate in the public interest rather than at the whim of different private operators.
- Support legislation to reduce the default speed limit in urban areas from 30mph to 20mph to support clean air, safe streets and improved social cohesion.

Notes

[1] The ECCLR Committee's press release in releasing their report:

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/107886.aspx>

[2] The Scottish Government is committed to creating at least four Low Emission Zones by 2020, with the first one due to be in place in Glasgow by the end of 2018. Find out more about Low Emission Zones here: <https://foe.scot/campaign/air-pollution/what-is-a-lez/>

[3] Blog - No Ambition for Glasgow's Low Emission Zone <https://foe.scot/no-ambition-glasgows-lez-meeting/>

[4] Scottish Environment LINK Resigns from Government Clean Air Group, <https://foe.scot/press-release/link-resigns-from-cafsgg/> - LINK had been represented by Friends of the Earth Scotland's Air Pollution Campaigner Emilia Hanna and Scottish Environment LINK Honorary Fellow Professor James Curran MBE.

[5] Please see our September 2017 Parliamentary Briefing on air pollution at <https://foe.scot/resource/briefing-air-pollution-sep-2017/> for:

- More details on non-LEZ policy recommendations
- Detail on how long-term exposure to air pollution at levels experience on Scotland's streets harms health
- Detail on how Scotland is in breach of both European law and Scottish statutory standards on air quality.

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