

£5 million boost for local authorities to tackle air pollution

Local authorities across England have been granted more than £5 million in government funding to deliver innovative projects to improve air quality.

The money, from the government's Air Quality Grant, helps councils develop and implement measures to benefit schools, businesses and communities and reduce the impact of dirty air on people's health. More than double the funding awarded in 2020 has been made available for this year's grant, meaning a raft of particularly strong applications are being supported.

The application process especially welcomed projects to tackle fine particulate matter (PM2.5) which is known to be the pollutant of greatest harm to human health. Plans to increase awareness and encourage long-term behaviour change were also successful.

These projects complement the wider UK plan for tackling roadside nitrogen dioxide concentrations, which includes a £3.5 billion investment into air quality and cleaner transport. The plan is supporting the uptake of low emissions vehicles, getting more people to cycle and walk, and encouraging cleaner public transport.

Proposals which have won funding include projects and campaigns to:

- partner with GPs to train them as Air Quality champions to raise awareness of the health impacts of air pollution in their surgeries;
- promote anti-idling and organise school street closures at pick-up and drop off times;
- encourage the uptake of electric taxis;
- enhance educational programmes for schoolchildren.

The £5,129,295 awarded in this round of funding means that almost £70 million has been awarded through the Air Quality Grant since it was launched in 1997. Since 2010, notable projects to receive funding include campaigns to promote greater awareness of pollution from domestic burning; a project to promote electric charging points for canal boats; and collaborations with local businesses to develop low or zero-emissions freight.

These projects have contributed to the significant improvement in air quality seen in the UK in recent decades – since 2010, emissions of fine particulate matter have fallen by 11%, while emissions of nitrogen oxides have fallen by 32% and are at their lowest level since records began.

Environment Minister Rebecca Pow said:

“Air pollution has improved significantly since 2010 but remains the greatest environmental risk to human health.

“This funding demonstrates our commitment to improving our air and also our

openness to innovation, through pioneering initiatives such as campaigns to encourage greater use of electric bikes and education programmes teaching children about the harms of fine particulate matter.

“We know local authorities are in the best position to address the issues they face in their areas. These projects demonstrate how they can deliver innovative solutions for their communities and we will continue to work with them closely to offer ongoing support.”

Transport Minister Rachel Maclean said:

“From promoting anti-idling to increasing the uptake of electric taxis, the Air Quality Grant will help to clean up our air as we look to build back greener and lower our carbon footprint.

“The funding announced today will take us one step closer to meeting our climate change obligations, improving air quality and supporting economic growth right across the country.”

The Air Quality Grant forms part of the wider UK Plan for Tackling Roadside Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) Concentrations, which includes a £3.5 billion investment into air quality and cleaner transport.

As a result of the NO₂ plan, and alongside the Air Quality Grant, the government has been working with 61 local authorities – and providing £880 million in funding – to reduce NO₂ concentrations through local plans that will deliver required improvements in the shortest time possible.

There are connected plans and initiatives that promote the uptake of low emissions vehicles, getting more people to cycle and walk, and encouraging cleaner public transport.

The government has also recently taken bold action to cut pollution from household burning – the single largest source of the pollutant Particulate Matter (PM_{2.5}), which is the most harmful air pollutant for human health – with bans on the sale of coal and wet wood for domestic burning coming into force from May this year.

The local authority schemes receiving funding in this round are:

Local authority	Project	Amount
Bedford Borough Council	Behaviour change and awareness project delivered in nurseries, schools and a university to encourage reduced car journeys, anti-idling and organise school street closures at pick up and drop off times	£99,775
Blaby District Council	Working with schools, local businesses and citizens to encourage behaviour change. Improvements to air quality monitoring and data for traffic management modelling	£139,300

Local authority	Project	Amount
Brighton and Hove City Council	Retrofit of 17 Double decker buses. Working in partnership with Lewes District Council, East Sussex County Council, West Sussex County Council, Worthing-Adur District Council, and Wealden District Council	£149,500
Bristol City Council	Particulate Matter monitoring and engagement programme to increase awareness and encourage behaviour change towards domestic burning	£122,597
Buckinghamshire Council	Pilot of employer salary sacrifice scheme to encourage a shift to electric vehicles	£97,900
Cambridge City Council	Purchase of sensors to monitor air quality levels to develop behaviour awareness campaign and inform future action to reduce Particulate Matter	£44,855
Cherwell District Council	Anti-idling campaign at level crossings, schools, hospitals and doctor's surgeries	£17,300
City of York Council	Feasibility study to reduce emissions for first and last mile light good deliveries in York and pilot of micro-consolidation centre	£297,237
Colchester Borough Council	Engagement with community to encourage behaviour change to improve air quality. Trialling of Pay as You Go electric cargo bike club	£248,700
Essex County Council	Collection and analysis of Air Quality and transport data to develop traffic management measures. Working in partnership with Colchester Borough Council	£249,755.57
Hammersmith & Fulham Council	Development of a borough wide construction site monitoring website	£136,800
Islington London Borough Council	Partnership with General Practitioners to train them as Air Quality Champions to deliver Air Quality improvement messages in GP surgeries	£143,832
Leicester City Council	Particulate Matter data gathering and mapping study to inform public engagement campaign	£249,600
Liverpool City Council	Schools Particulate Matter education and awareness programme supported by Air Quality data gathered by pupils with portable monitoring devices	£131,954
London Borough of Camden	Installation of electric points for use by licenced ice cream vans	£100,000
London Borough of Lambeth	Street by street mapping of Particulate Matter to form awareness programme	£31,158
Oxford City Council	Development of Air Quality community website. Working in partnership with Cherwell District Council, West Oxfordshire District Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, Vale of White Horse District Council, and Oxfordshire County Council	£162,500

Local authority	Project	Amount
Oxford City Council	Particulate Matter campaign to raise awareness and change behaviour towards domestic burning	£45,000
Sandwell MBC	Working with the Faith Community to raise awareness and change behaviour to improve local Air Quality	£75,760
Sefton MBC Air Quality	Creation of a public interactive immersive room teaching children about air quality. Enhancement of existing website to engage and support all Sefton Primary schools to learn about Air Quality	£122,500
Slough Borough Council	Encourage take up of electric taxis through behaviour and awareness campaign	£370,035
Southampton City Council	Particulate Matter data gathering to raise awareness and encourage improved practices for domestic burning. Working in partnership with Eastleigh Borough Council Winchester City Council, and New Forest District Council	£291,547.18
Spelthorne	Encourage take up of electric taxis through behaviour and awareness campaign. Working in partnership with Elmbridge Borough Council, Epsom and Ewell Borough Council, Guildford Borough Council, Reigate and Banstead Borough Council, Waverley Borough Council, Woking Borough Council, and Surrey County Council	£256,686
Staffordshire County Council	Engagement with schools and businesses to encourage behaviour change to improve air quality, and delivering events promoting electric vehicles. Working in partnership with Cannock Chase District Council, East Staffordshire Borough Council and Staffordshire Moorlands District Council	£296,828
Tunbridge Wells	Behaviour and awareness campaign delivered through an interactive digital educational package aimed at primary school children and their parents. Working in partnership with Canterbury City Council	£103,770
West Berkshire Council Air Quality	Anti-idling campaign for 3 boroughs and purchase of sensors to monitor air quality levels to develop future action to reduce Particulate Matter. Working in partnership with Bracknell Forest Borough Council and Wokingham Borough Council	£259,406
Westminster City Council	Engagement feasibility study to develop solutions for canal boat electric charging infrastructure	£60,000

Local authority	Project	Amount
Westminster City Council (Westminster Cross River Partnership)	Expansion on Clean Air Village 1, 2 and 3 – Engagement and behaviour change project that will implement a range of freight solutions in order to clean up London’s air. Working in partnership with Westminster, London Boroughs of Barnet, Brent, Hammersmith & Fulham, Islington, Lambeth, Merton, Richmond upon Thames, Wandsworth and Kent County Council	£700,000
Wokingham Borough Council	Schools education programme to raise awareness and encourage active and sustainable travel choices. Development of Mobile app to help local commuters make sustainable travel choices	£125,000