

Northern Ireland soon to take a step forward on clean air

Northern Ireland will soon move forward on a clean air strategy that aims to make our air quality better, improve our health and wellbeing, reduce pollutants in the air we breathe and protect the environment

Air quality improvements at Lochee Road long overdue and utterly vital



Following last week's debate at Dundee City Council's Community Safety and Public Protection Committee on air quality in the city, as reported in the local media, I have called on Dundee City Council to ensure it acts on promises made to improve air quality in Lochee Road by tackling traffic congestion and reducing emissions in the street.

The report before committee included this commitment :

"Investigations into potential interventions to reduce both emissions and

traffic congestion on the Lochee Road corridor will continue to be explored by the Head of Sustainable Transportation and Roads during the LEZ development process. These investigations will take a route corridor approach and take cognisance of potential traffic displacement onto other, less appropriate roads in residential areas. The route corridor review will also require to consider future bus priority, active travel and traffic congestion.”

As residents know, I have long campaigned on air quality issues, particularly in relation to Lochee Road where, as recently as January 2020, I again highlighted deep concern that, yet again, leading air quality campaigners Friends of the Earth had highlighted air quality concerns in Lochee Road in its Scotland’s most polluted streets survey with Seagate in the city also highlighted in the January national air quality survey.

Whilst I welcomed the commitment to tackle the traffic congestion in Lochee Road, I pointed out at the council meeting that I have been pressing for this for many years, on behalf of my constituents who live in Lochee Road. There are a number of specific and affordable actions I made clear I want to see the council do immediately.

Firstly, tackle the junction with Cleghorn Street where, following minor accidents, the operation of the junction was to be reviewed for road safety reasons. This should tackle the tailbacks of traffic trying to turn into Lochee Road.

Secondly, the operation of the traffic lights at Polepark Road and Dudhope Terrace junctions need to be reviewed. If they were more efficient, we would see fewer tailbacks of cars and therefore a decrease of emissions into the air in the Lochee Road area. Following the committee meeting, I had a lengthy and useful discussion with a senior roads officer at the City Council about this and possible modelling to see what could be achieved by possible lights sequencing alterations.

I have highlighted that, earlier this year, the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air published research showing many likely long-term health benefits from the pollution reductions in the UK and elsewhere in Europe, including fewer children developing asthma, fewer preterm births and fewer deaths long-term from better air.

It is therefore vital there is a proactive approach to tackling the air quality issue. I have raised this on numerous occasions with the council in the past and we need to see a situation where no Dundee streets have unacceptable air quality. A significant number of constituents live in the tenement flats on the south side of Lochee Road near to the junction where nitrogen dioxide are unacceptably high. It is therefore important that the council has a clear strategy for improving air quality here.

The proposed city centre low emission zone will help the surrounding area in particular in relation to buses that go up and down Lochee Road that have to access the city centre – they will have to be newer and cleaner. However, detailed work tackling the specific issues at particular streets with air

quality issues, like Lochee Road, is vital.

Actions speak louder than words and we do need to see momentum to achieve a proper and lasting solution. Residents deserve to breathe clean air in every street in Dundee.

Murphy announces grant scheme for hospitality businesses in North West

Finance Minister Conor Murphy has today announced a grant scheme for hospitality businesses in the North West.

Publication of the statistical bulletin “Children in Care in Northern Ireland 2018-19”

The Department of Health has today published the “Children in Care in Northern Ireland 2018-19 Statistical Bulletin”.

Northern Ireland beef ships to US citizens

Agriculture Minister Edwin Poots has visited WD Meats, one of two Northern Ireland beef processors to be granted access to the US market for the first time in 20 years, in an historic moment for local farmers.