

Lambeth Council accused of covering up air pollution crisis



28 February 2019

Lambeth Labour has been accused of “covering up” the borough’s deadly air pollution crisis after it failed to monitor one of Britain’s most polluted roads.

Air pollution has gone unchecked in Brixton Road, London, for six months since the street’s monitor broke in August 2018. [1]

Lambeth Green Party has criticised the council for failing to put an interim system in place, saying it is “choking its residents” by leaving air pollution unchecked.

Brixton Road is one of Britain’s most polluted streets. Last year air pollution in Brixton Road broke annual limits by January 30, a slight improvement on the decade before when the street always broke annual limits within six days. [2]

The last air pollution reading from the Brixton Road monitor was recorded on 29 August 2018. [3] Lambeth Greens have repeatedly urged Lambeth Council to fix the monitor as a matter of urgency, and to use a temporary monitor until the permanent one is fixed.

In September 2018 Lambeth councillor Pete Elliott asked the council why the monitor had been offline. Cllr Elliott followed this up in October 2018 when he asked the council to ensure pollution continued to be measured while the monitor was broken. [4]

These questions were repeated in November 2018 and January 2019. To date, no timeline has been given for when the monitor will be repaired and monitoring can recommence.

In response to a question from Green Party London Assembly member Caroline Russell, the Mayor of London confirmed the Brixton Road monitor became water damaged in August 2018 and said it was expected to be repaired by the end of January this year. [5]

Cllr Jonathan Bartley, co-leader of the Green Party and leader of the Green opposition on Lambeth Council, said:

“Lambeth Labour is covering up a deadly air pollution crisis. The council is choking its citizens and putting lives at risk by leaving air pollution in one of Britain’s dirtiest streets unchecked. It is unforgivable that pollution levels aren’t being measured, with no temporary systems in place pending repair of the permanent system.

“Greens in Lambeth have continuously raised this with the council and have been fobbed off every time. Everyone has the right to breathe clean air, but we simply can’t tackle air pollution effectively if we fail to measure it. Lambeth Council must install a temporary air pollution monitor in Brixton Road immediately, and fix the permanent one as a matter of urgency.

“There are basic steps Lambeth Council can take to clean up our air and make the borough a healthier place to live and work. As a start we need to see tougher measures on vehicle engine idling, an end to waste incineration, incentives for businesses to use environmentally friendly methods, and proper no-drop off zones around schools. Nationally we desperately need the Government to back a new Clean Air Act fit for the 21st century.”

Green peer Jenny Jones introduced the bill to the House of Lords in July last year – the 70th anniversary of the first Clean Air Act. [6]

Notes:

1. <https://www.london.gov.uk/questions/2019/0251>

2. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/jan/30/london-reaches-legal-air-pollution-limit-just-one-month-into-the-new-year>

3. https://www.londonair.org.uk/london/asp/publicbulletin.asp?region=0&site=LB4&bulletin=daily&bulletindate=29/08/2018&la_id=&postcode=&level=All&MapType=Google&VenueCode=

<https://www.london.gov.uk/questions/2019/0251>

4. <https://lambeth.greenparty.org.uk/news/2019/01/18/lambeth-council-slammed-over-failure-to-act-on-air-pollution/>

5. <https://www.london.gov.uk/questions/2019/0251>

6. <https://jennyjones.org/2018/07/04/clean-air-human-rights-bill-launch/>

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