

News story: Government to fund local authority plans to tackle air pollution

Further action to tackle air pollution in the UK has been set out today as the government publishes a supplement to its plan to improve air quality.

Ten local authorities will now take forward new measures, developed with and funded by central government, to reduce pollution levels.

Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

While air quality has improved significantly in recent years, we know urgent action is still required to tackle roadside air pollution in our towns and cities.

This is why through our £3.5 billion national air quality plan, we are working with local authorities across the UK and I am pleased ten local authorities will now implement new measures to drive down pollution.

The Roads Minister Jesse Norman and I have written to the leaders of all the authorities that have submitted feasibility studies to thank them for their hard work and underline that Defra will continue to support them to improve air quality in their areas.

While Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) levels have fallen significantly in recent decades, including a 27% drop since 2010, the UK Plan for Tackling Roadside Nitrogen Dioxide Concentrations outlines how councils with the worst levels of air pollution at busy road junctions and hotspots must take robust action.

Earlier this year, Ministerial Directions were issued to 33 local authorities, requiring them to submit studies on the steps they can take to comply with roadside NO₂ limits in the shortest amount of time. Today, the government published a supplement to this plan setting out work carried out with those 33 local authorities and the further action which will now be taken:

- Ten local authorities (Dudley, Leicester, Newcastle-under Lyme, Portsmouth, Reading, Wolverhampton, Sandwell, Solihull, Basingstoke and Deane, and South Gloucestershire) will take forward new measures to tackle air pollution.

The measures include:

1. The retrofitting of approximately 400 buses with technology to reduce

emissions;

2. Traffic management measures such as adjustments to signalling to reduce congestion;
 3. Behavioural change campaigns to encourage individuals to take action and reduce their contribution to air pollution.
- Eight local authorities will now carry out a more detailed study outlining in detail how they will tackle the more persistent air quality problems they have identified. This will be presented to government by [31 October 2019]. These are Bolsover, Bradford, Portsmouth, Broxbourne, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Stoke-on-Trent, Leicester and Liverpool. Portsmouth, Leicester and Newcastle-under-Lyme are being directed to carry out more detailed studies, but have also identified measures that can bring forward compliance quicker.
 - Eighteen local authorities are already operating within legal limits or have not found any measures to bring compliance sooner. These will be expected to maintain their work to reduce pollution levels and improve the quality of the air.

The government will ensure sufficient funding is in place to support all the activities set out in this supplement to the national plan.

Also announced today is the Air Quality Grant for 2018-19 which will provide support to local authorities across England to deliver projects to improve air quality. Applicants in previous years have been awarded funding to install electric vehicle charging points, improve cycling infrastructure and develop local online air quality resources.

This year's total of £3million is the largest air quality grant to date.

The full Supplement to the [N02 Plan](#) is available online.

As part of the UK Plan for Tackling Roadside Nitrogen Dioxide Concentrations nearly £500m extra funding was made available to support local authorities to tackle their N02 exceedances. Due to the highly localised nature of the problem, local knowledge is crucial in solving pollution problems in these hotspots and it is accordingly right that local authorities should take the lead, with support from the government.

The government has been working with Birmingham, Leeds, Nottingham, Southampton and Derby since December 2015 and required them to produce full business cases by 15 September 2018.

Final plans from Birmingham, Leeds and Nottingham were received. The government needs to assess these detailed submissions but are pleased with

the progress this demonstrates.

Southampton and Derby did not finalise the plans by this deadline, instead submitting progress updates. The government has issued letters setting out concerns, urging them to ensure this does not delay delivering better air quality, as delays will have serious associated consequences up to and including legal action.

In July 2017 the government required 23 additional local authorities to draw up final plans at the latest by 31 December 2018 and is supporting them to achieve this.

The full list of successful [Air Quality Grant](#) projects from 2017/2018 can be found online.

On 22 May the government launched a new world leading [Clean Air Strategy](#) for consultation which aims to halve the harm to human health from air pollution in the UK by 2030.

On 9 July the government launched the new [Road to Zero Strategy](#) setting out the Government's ambition for the UK to be the best place in the world and the ambitious aim for at least half of new car sales to be ultra-low emission by 2030.