

Update on Greater Manchester Clean Air Zone

The Government has today (Friday 4 February) granted permission to Greater Manchester Authorities to delay the implementation of their Clean Air Zone.

Decisions around the introduction of Clean Air Zones are the responsibility of local authorities, in consultation with residents and local businesses. However, since Greater Manchester's proposals were submitted in 2019 there have been a number of challenges, including the impact of Covid-19 on supply chains and the price and availability of second-hand vehicles. According to evidence provided by Greater Manchester, these impacts will make it harder for people to upgrade to cleaner vehicles, meaning the Clean Air Zone is unlikely to deliver compliance with legal limits by the original date of 2024.

This has led the Mayor of Greater Manchester to request more time to achieve NO2 compliance and enable Greater Manchester local authorities to review their NO2 plan.

The government has carefully considered the Mayor's proposal and following meetings last week and further discussions today, the Environment Secretary has agreed to allow a short delay to the implementation of the Clean Air Zone.

This will allow Greater Manchester to provide further evidence and a revised plan by July setting out how it will deliver legal levels of NO2 as soon as possible, and no later than 2026.

In making this decision, the Environment Secretary has made it clear that it is his priority to fulfil the Government's legal obligations to deliver compliance with NO2 limits in the shortest time possible.

It is his expectation that Greater Manchester will continue to move at pace to reduce air pollution and improve public health. Given the scale of the proposed Clean Air Zone, at nearly three times the size of London's Ultra Low Emissions Zone, it is important to get this right.

Air pollution has reduced significantly since 2010 – emissions of fine particulate matter have fallen by 11%, while emissions of nitrogen oxides at their lowest level since records began. However, there is more to do, which is why the Government is investing £880m at a national level to tackle nitrogen dioxide exceedances. Nearly £170m has already been allocated across Greater Manchester to help reduce nitrogen dioxide levels.

Ministers and officials will continue to engage constructively with Greater Manchester on its revised plans and updated evidence, providing a cleaner, greener and fairer city for all.