

Cleaning up London's air

London Environment Directors' Network

LEDNET



Executive Summary: LEDNet/ADPH London Joint position statement

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Why clean up London's air?

Air pollution in London is a major public health issue. Each year, thousands of premature deaths are in part attributable to poor air quality, which widens inequalities by reducing the length and quality of life in most vulnerable residents, including children, and costs the NHS up to £3.7 billion each year. London Council's 2020 Air Quality Public Polling showed that 78% of Londoners think that tackling air pollution should be a priority.



COVID-19 and air quality

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the national lockdown for the first wave from March 2020 to June 2020 led to a behavioural change of Londoners that contributed to the temporary improvement in air quality, with a reduction in personal vehicle usage, road traffic, and an increase in active travel whilst socially distancing. The pandemic has also highlighted the stark health inequalities of the city, with researchers assessing the potential links between COVID-19 deaths and air pollution.

What is this joint statement and why now?

The London Environment Directors' Network (LEDNet) and the Association of Directors of Public Health London (ADPH London) published a joint position statement in September 2019 to set out how we should respond to this challenge, based on our expertise and the available evidence. Since the statement was published, we are living in the new norm since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, and therefore must look at sustaining behaviours that contributed to the positive changes to air quality where possible, and address the health inequalities that have been observed. LEDNet and ADPH London have revised the joint position statement, following the first wave of the pandemic.

Our recommendations are:

1. To advocate for at least **2.5% of UK annual GDP** to be spent on tackling air quality and climate change in the UK.
2. **Capitalise on behavioural changes on active travel during COVID-19 pandemic**, protect Londoners, particularly children and young people from exposure to poor air quality, and **promote further inclusive active travel**.
3. Support a **shared narrative and campaign** on air quality and public health impacts across London that will change the public's perception around their own contribution to cleaning our air.
4. **Restrict driving fuelled by petrol or diesel and support cleaner alternatives** by supporting schemes such as the **Ultra Low Emission Zone** (ULEZ), and scrappage schemes and local schemes such as restricted and emissions-based parking, low emissions zones, school streets and Low emission neighbourhoods as well as building better walking and cycling infrastructure.
5. **Support retrofitting schemes** of London's residential properties to reduce fuel poverty, address health issues caused by inefficient housing and green the economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.
6. Use **public sector procurement and social value action** to reduce our own contribution to air pollution, in particular by moving faster towards ultra-low and zero emissions vehicle fleets.
7. **Speak with one voice** as boroughs to secure the resources and powers needed to reduce air pollution and protect the health of our residents.

We welcome engagement around our position statement, and you can contact:

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