



Press Release
To: Environment Editors
16th June 2008

Leading NGOs call for Government Commitment to Full Compliance with Air Quality Laws

Today Environmental Protection UK¹ is joined by 10 leading environmental and health based organisations in writing to the Prime Minister urging Government commitment to comply fully with the recently approved new European Union Directive on Air Quality².

Text of the Letter

“Dear Prime Minister

The provision of a healthy environment is one of the Government’s greatest responsibilities to protect citizens. Despite this, levels of air pollutants in many parts of the UK are substantially in breach of the health and ecosystem standards set in the Air Quality Strategy for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland^{3,4} and are currently expected to remain so for some time.

We, the undersigned, believe that the recent approval of the new European Union Directive on ambient air quality and cleaner air for Europe gives you the opportunity to make a clear and unequivocal public commitment that the Government will ensure full United Kingdom (UK) compliance with it.

We urge you to consider going further by committing the Government to improving human health and protecting biodiversity, the environment and historical sites by complying with laws concerning emissions to air generally: whether for the purpose of fighting climate change; improving air quality or otherwise. If the UK does not meet its short-term obligations for air quality, what chance is there that it will meet five-year carbon budgets and longer-term commitments introduced in the Climate Change Bill?

An unambiguous commitment now from the Government backed thereafter by prompt and meaningful action will give stakeholders of all types, whether from business, the non-governmental sector or citizens generally, the certainty and time necessary to play their full part in delivering the required changes in the most cost effective manner.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Asthma UK

The British Medical Association

Campaign for Better Transport

Campaign for Clean Air in London

The Environmental Industries Commission

Environmental Protection UK

Green Alliance

The Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland

Sustrans

The UK Public Health Association

WWF-UK

Quote from Environmental Protection UK:

Philip Mulligan, Chief Executive of Environmental Protection UK, said:

“We’re delighted to be joined in our call for full compliance by such a wide group of well respected organisations from across the fields of the environment and health. Poor air quality presents a major threat to public health in many parts of the UK, and full compliance with the new EU Air Quality Directive will help to provide a cleaner, and more importantly, healthier environment for us all to live in.”

More:

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Notes for Editors

1. Environmental Protection UK (formerly NSCA) www.environmental-protection.org.uk is the environmental protection charity supported by pollution control professionals. We have been working for a cleaner, quieter, healthier world since 1898.
2. The new EU Directive came into force on the 11th June 2008. It will merge and streamline four existing EU directives and a Council Decision in a single text to become Europe’s main air quality legislation for 12 regulated pollutants including nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), ground-level ozone (O₃), particulate matter (PM₁₀) and sulphur dioxide (SO₂) while setting new objectives for fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}). It will modernise reporting

provisions and provide a framework to address breaches of air quality laws that have taken place since 2005, which were set in legislation in 1999, for which no time extensions were allowed.

3. Air pollution has impacts on human health ranging from minor effects on the respiratory system to reduced lung function, asthma, chronic bronchitis, cardiovascular disease and reduced life expectancy. Air pollution in the EU, most notably from fine particulate matter and ground-level ozone, causes the premature death of almost 370,000 citizens every year, reducing average life expectancy by an average of nine months.
4. Local Authorities are required to periodically assess air quality in their areas and declare 'Air Quality Management Areas' where levels of certain pollutants are found to be above EU and UK limits. Currently 218 local authorities have declared an Air Quality Management Area for Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂), Particulate Matter (PM₁₀) or Sulphur Dioxide (SO₂). A full list is available at the link below:
www.airquality.co.uk/archive/laqm/list.php