

**The Rt Hon Andrea Leadsom MP**

Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

(Sent via email)

Cc: Catriona Henderson

7 April 2017

Dear Secretary of State,

**Action on air pollution**

I am writing to urge you to act to reduce air pollution in London, and in particular to take forward the measures recommended to you by the Mayor of London. The Mayor, following long-term pressure by the London Assembly, is bringing forward action at the London level to reduce air pollution in the capital. London, as you know, is the most severely polluted part of the UK with toxic particles and nitrogen dioxide contributing to an estimated 9,400 early deaths in the city per year, according to a recent study by King's College. The effectiveness of the Mayor's measures depends in significant part on support from the Government.

Following last year's ruling by the High Court, the Government must produce a plan to minimise human exposure to air pollution and bring London's air pollution down below legal limits, as soon as possible. We look forward to scrutinising your draft plan to be produced this month. In producing the draft plan, we recommend that you look closely and favourably at the following proposals put to you by the Mayor.

**A new Clean Air Act**

The law needs updating to provide a framework for tackling today's air pollution challenges, particularly in the context of exit from the EU. A new Act should provide a legally enforceable right to clean air (at standards at least as stringent as the current standards set across the EU).

**Regional and local powers**

Regional and local government needs powers to better regulate all sources of emissions. The Mayor is particularly seeking powers to regulate emissions from construction sites and machinery, and from waterway traffic, and powers to better regulate Private Hire Vehicles. Emissions from wood burning should also be regulated.

**Regional and local funding**

Action against air pollution needs funding, and some of this funding should go to City Hall and London's boroughs. Vehicle Excise Duty raised in London could be one source, perhaps to fund improvements to nationally strategic roads within the capital, freeing Transport for London (TfL) resources to tackle air quality. In addition to the £3 million Defra grants programme for local authorities across the UK there should be further funding for London authorities, which have a large proportion of the UK's pollution exposure.

### **Scrappage scheme**

The zonal pollution charges to be introduced in London and other cities will have a much greater effect on the composition of traffic on the roads if they are accompanied by a scrappage scheme for highly polluting vehicles. Successive Mayors have called for such a scheme, as has this committee. It should initially be directed at the phase-out of diesel vehicles, particularly older and heavily-polluting ones – not only are these the most polluting, but government policies have hitherto encouraged people to buy them. A diesel scrappage scheme was strongly supported in the Mayor's consultation on air pollution measures, and TfL has developed a detailed proposal which the Government should consider closely.

### **Reform of Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) and other fiscal incentives**

VED currently gives a limited incentive to vehicles banded as having low carbon emissions. However, by incentivising diesel vehicles, this encourages higher emissions of toxic pollutants. Government policy should work in a consistent direction and VED bandings should reflect emissions of oxides of nitrogen and particulate matter, as well as carbon dioxide. Diesel vehicles will, as a result, tend to be in higher bands. Secondary diesel engines should also be included in the VED emissions calculations for refrigerated lorries and other large vehicles that have them.

I would be grateful to receive a reply to this letter, outlining how the Government will respond to the issues raised. It would be useful if you could copy your reply electronically to the Committee's Scrutiny Manager, Ian Williamson, on [ian.williamson@london.gov.uk](mailto:ian.williamson@london.gov.uk).

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



**Léonie Cooper AM**

Chair of the Environment Committee