

Air pollution announcement: Caroline Lucas full speech

5 May 2017

- * Greens reveal ten-point checklist for Government's air pollution plan
- * Caroline Lucas: "We must have a new Clean Air Act to protect the health of future generations"

The Green Party has today (May 5) unveiled an 'air pollution challenge' as the Government is due to release their own plans to tackle the high levels of toxins in the air.

Party co-leader, Caroline Lucas, was in Bristol highlighting what she calls a 'catastrophic failure' by a Government 'trying its best to shirk its responsibilities on air pollution'.

Notes:

1. Caroline Lucas' full speech (check against delivery):

Good morning everyone. Thank you for coming down here this morning to talk about the air pollution crisis.

After seven years battling environmental lawyers in the courts, the Government has now been forced to publish a plan to tackle illegal levels of air pollution in towns and cities across the UK.

The facts around dirty air are widely known, but worth repeating.

Each year in the UK, around 40,000 early deaths are attributable to air pollution.

It affects us all – but its impacts are not felt evenly.

You're more likely to suffer if you're young or old. If you live in poverty. If you're not white. And people who are already ill suffer disproportionately.

This is a national public health crisis.

The air quality plan – expected today, and due by Tuesday at the latest – comes after a totally shambolic week for Ministers.

First they tried to delay its publication, claiming that to do so would unfairly influence local and national elections.

That last ditch attempt at inaction was rightly rejected.

In a strongly worded judgment, the High Court noted that Ministers had plenty of time to act, having known about the deadline for over six months.

Less than a week later, and the day before people across the country went to the polls in local elections, the details of the Air Quality Plan were [leaked to The Telegraph](#) by the Conservative party.

So much for election rules.

As we wait for the Government's long overdue policy to be released, the Green Party has today release a ten-point checklist for what a serious plan would include.

First and foremost, it must announce a new Clean Air Act – enshrining the right to breathe clean air into UK statute – protecting the health of future generations forever.

It must strengthen and expand the network of Clean Air Zones – including here in Bristol.

It must overhaul our transport policy – investing in walking, cycling, and clean, public transport.

To help fund comprehensive action, the plan should also set out how car companies who cheated vehicles emissions testing over many years, will pay for the damage they have caused to our health and the environment.

Despite a 14 billion dollar fine being levied by the United States government on one car company alone – here in the UK, not a single penny has been paid by the car manufacturers who deliberated cheated the system at the expense of people's lives across the UK.

And whilst the Government – supported by opposition parties – continue to invest in the dirty fuels of the past – credible action on air pollution must include a huge programme of investment in the clean, renewable energy that we have in abundance.

Anything short of wide reaching action on the air pollution emergency is utterly unacceptable.

If the plan is as weak as expected, it will condemn thousands of children and families to continue to suffer the deadly effects of this preventable crisis.

The Green Party has the plan – and if we act now, we can create a healthier future for children across the country – and build a more caring, confident country for everyone.

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