

Michael Gove and Jeremy Hunt write for the Telegraph, as the...

Brexit will allow us to clean up Britain's air

Our departure from the EU means we can go faster and further to reduce pollution in the UK

MICHAEL GOVE and JEREMY HUNT



Ever since man first lit a fire to keep warm, cook food and work metals, smoke has been polluting our atmosphere. And throughout history, there has been a price to pay. In 1956, killer smogs caused by pollution from cars, factories and coal fires prompted a previous Conservative government to pass a Clean Air Act to protect the nation's health and that of the environment. Today, the Government is again taking decisive action: launching a comprehensive strategy to cut pollution and save lives. For although we have come a long way in recent decades - emissions from traditional industries have declined - we have come to know even

more about the links between all forms of pollution and ill health. In the UK, air pollution is identified as the top environmental risk to human health, and the fourth biggest threat after cancer, heart disease and obesity. Our proposals will cut the costs of air pollution to society by an estimated £1 billion every year by 2020, rising to £2.5 billion every year from 2030. New primary legislation, last updated in the Clean Air Act 1969, will give new powers to local government and tools to make air pollution a factor in every relevant policy decision. The strategy sets out world-leading goals on clean air and public health along World Health Organisation guidelines. It means we will go further and faster than the EU in reducing human exposure to damaging particulate matter pollution - where tiny particles enter the bloodstream and can lodge in vital organs such as the brain, heart and lungs. And it means that for the first time we are committed to the comprehensive range of actions necessary to remedy the true human and financial costs of air pollution, and spare this generation - and those to come - from its most malign effects. Our nation's prosperity depends on

the good health of its people. Defra and the Department of Health and Social Care will work together with other government departments, households, local councils, industry and farmers to confront this ongoing threat to the well-being of the public, the environment and the economy. Some sources of pollution remain obvious: belching car fumes and the noisome they create in urban areas. The strategy we are launching today builds on last year's Plan for Tackling Roadside Nitrogen Dioxide Concentrations, which was supported by a £2.5 billion investment into cleaner transport as well as a pledge to end the sale of conventional diesel and petrol cars by 2040. Where pollution is persistently above the legal limits, the Government will require local authorities to use their existing powers, including the creation of Clean Air Zones. But the problem of pollution goes far further than vehicle fumes - and our strategy ensures that many more people are aware of the risks from all types of air pollution. Other threats include domestic cleaning solvents, chemicals in carpets, paints and air fresheners, and agriculture - which accounts for 88 per cent of UK ammonia emissions.

Farmers can make a big difference. We can support them to invest in the necessary infrastructure and equipment investments thanks to our new system of rewarding public goods with public money. We will deal with the pollution caused by coal- and wood-burning stoves and open fires. Thanks to a spike in popularity, these now contribute 38 per cent of all particulate matter pollution. With new science and technology we can bring this figure down. We aim to cut total particulate matter emissions by 30 per cent by 2020, and 46 per cent by 2030, and will ensure that only the cleanest fuels for domestic burning will be available for sale. Additionally, in due course we will ensure that only the cleanest types of stove will be available to buy and install. With the world getting wealthier, and technology getting cleaner, it is unacceptable that poor air quality is cutting lives short, damaging children's health and poisoning our natural environment. Our departure from the EU marks a new chapter for the UK, in which we set gold standards based on scientific excellence. This clean air strategy will ensure that the actions we take today will secure our health for tomorrow.

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Michael Gove and Jeremy Hunt write for the Telegraph, as the Government has announced a new Clean Air Strategy designed to cut air pollution, save lives and leave our environment in a better state than we found it