

News story: UK to ratify international protocol to reduce air pollution

The government has taken an important step towards ratifying the 2012 amendments to the Gothenburg Protocol, an international agreement to reduce air pollution.

An Explanatory Memorandum signed by the Environment Secretary and the text of the amendment to the Gothenburg Protocol were yesterday laid before parliament. This follows on from progressing with ratification of two other amended air pollution Protocols earlier this year.

The amended Protocol sets ambitious international targets for the reduction of damaging air pollutants including new national emission reduction commitments to be met by 2020 and beyond for sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, ammonia, non-methane volatile organic compounds and fine particulate matter.

The amended Protocol also introduces stricter limit values for emissions from new and existing major stationary sources, such as combustion plants, and iron and steel manufacturing plants.

The UK has been a Party to the Convention since 1982 and ratified the original Protocol in 2005. Over this period major investment by successive governments and industry and a shift in the UK fuel mix away from coal towards cleaner forms of energy have helped to significantly improve air quality levels. However work is still needed to combat harmful pollutant emissions.

Environment Secretary, Michael Gove said:

“Air pollution remains a significant threat to public health and we are committed to tackling its causes and improving air quality.

“This is why we are signing up to the amended Gothenburg Protocol and will shortly build on our £3.5bn plan to tackle roadside emissions by publishing a comprehensive Clean Air Strategy.”