

Press release: Government approves Nottingham's air quality plan

The Government today announced it has approved Nottingham City Council's new plan to tackle air pollution in Nottingham city centre.

For the past three years, the council has been working with officials from Defra and the Department for Transport to identify measures to reduce levels of pollution in the shortest possible time and deliver compliance with legal air quality limits.

The plans were assessed by government officials and cleared by Ministers who have issued a Ministerial Direction for the plan to be implemented. Nottingham is the first local authority to have their air quality plan approved as part of the government's wider £3.5bn plan to tackle harmful emissions from road transport across the country.

Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

I am delighted to approve Nottingham City Council's new air quality plan. Air pollution is the top environmental risk to health in the UK and these government-funded plans will clean up the air in the city centre, protecting residents and visitors alike.

The plans have been finalised thanks to hard work and collaboration – a brilliant example of what can be achieved when local and national government work together towards a common goal.

We will continue to work with local authorities across the UK to improve the quality of the air we breathe.

Nottingham's plan will see the council improving air quality by:

- Retrofitting 171 buses with technology to reduce emissions, funded through the Government's Clean Bus Technology Fund;
- Changing the age and emissions policy for hackney carriages and supporting an increase in low emission taxis. £1m from government will be used to provide a licensing discount for drivers, a taxi rank with charging points, fund home chargers and expand the council's 'try before you buy' scheme, which started this week
- In addition, Nottingham City Council has received funding from the Government to support the conversion of its own fleet, including replacing heavy, high polluting vehicles such as bin lorries with electric vehicles.

Councillor Sally Longford, Portfolio Holder for Energy and Environment, said:

We worked hard on a plan that would reduce air pollution in the shortest possible time for our citizens, and we're thrilled this has now been agreed, along with nearly £1m funding for extra measures to support taxi drivers.

We're looking forward to progressing these schemes to clean up the city's buses and taxis, building on our strong track record in improving air quality through investment in sustainable transport, such as the electric tram, our award-winning electric and biogas bus fleets and cycle network.

Air pollution is a significant threat to public health today, and road transport emissions are a big part of that. We're confident we can deliver our plan and go even further to improve the quality of the air in our city.

While Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) levels have fallen significantly in recent decades, including a 27% drop since 2010, The UK Plan for Tackling Roadside Nitrogen Dioxide Concentrations outlines how councils with the worst levels of air pollution at busy road junctions and hotspots must take action. Due to the highly localised nature of the problem, local knowledge is crucial in solving pollution problems in these hotspots. This is why local authorities, like Nottingham City Council, take the lead on developing air quality plans, with support and funding from central government.

Work continues on air quality plans in towns and cities across the rest of the UK. Final plans have also been received from Birmingham and Leeds, while 33 other local authorities are still working to develop theirs. Once their plans are finalised and approved by Defra and DfT Ministers, the government will ensure sufficient funding is in place for the agreed measures.

The government is also taking wider action to tackle air pollution:

- Our new world leading Clean Air Strategy which was welcomed by the World Health Organisation sets out how we aim to halve the harm to human health from air pollution in the UK by 2030.
- Through our new Road to Zero Strategy we have set out our ambition for the UK to be the best place in the world to develop and manufacture zero emission vehicles, consulting on plans for every new home and lamppost to be equipped with an electric vehicle charge point.
- We will introduce new legislation to give local government new powers to take decisive action in areas with an air pollution problem.
- We will ensure only the cleanest home burning fuels will be available for sale and only the cleanest stoves will be available to buy and install.
- For the first time, we will take concerted action to tackle ammonia emissions from farming by requiring and supporting farmers to invest in the infrastructure and equipment that will reduce emissions.
- By ending the sale of conventional new diesel and petrol cars and vans from 2040, the UK is going further than almost every other European nation.