

# News story: Air Quality Grant programme

Projects across the country will benefit from almost £3.7 million as part of an annual funding scheme to help combat air quality locally, it was announced today.

The Air Quality Grant programme has awarded more than £52 million to a variety of projects since it started in 1997 and helps local authorities tackle air quality in their areas to reduce the impact on people's health and create cleaner and healthier environments.

This year's Air Quality Grant programme for 2016/17 will focus on supporting schemes set up to tackle nitrogen dioxide levels, and include:

- £163,100 for electric vehicle charging and infrastructure improvements and an electric vehicle car club in East Herts
- £498,600 for a Clean Air Zone study by Bristol and South Gloucestershire councils
- £400,000 to support Nottingham trial fuel cell technology and encourage ultra-low emission vehicles in the local NHS

Environment Minister Therese Coffey said:

"Tackling poor air quality is a priority for the government and we are working closely with Local Authorities so they can play a crucial role in this.

"I was delighted at the broad range of ideas submitted, from using the latest technology to promoting cleaner taxis and increasing the uptake of electric vehicles, and these projects will help to improve the quality of life for people who live and work in our towns and cities, both now and in the future."

Transport Minister John Hayes said:

"We are determined to cut emissions and improve air quality for communities across the country; as a father of two, I would want no less for any family than I'd want for my own. These grants will help councils take significant practical steps to clean up the air and to improve communal wellbeing in their area.

"This good work will sit alongside the government's draft air quality plan which will be published in the spring."

The government is firmly committed to improving the UK's air quality and cutting harmful emissions and its air quality plan will go out to consultation later this year.

More than £2 billion has already been committed since 2011 to increase the

uptake of ultra-low emissions vehicles and support greener transport schemes and set out how it will improve air quality through a new programme of Clean Air Zones. In last year's Autumn Statement, a further £290m was allocated to support electric vehicles, low emission buses and taxis, and alternative fuels.

Local Authority	Project	Amount £
Birmingham City Council	Parking reform to reduce traffic in city centre combined with awareness raising	350,000
Bristol City Council, South Gloucestershire Council	Clean Air Zone feasibility study	498,600
Cornwall County Council	Fitting council vehicles with oxy-hydrogen electrolyzers	236,650
Derby City Council	Retro-fitting of Council's HGV fleet with emissions reduction technology	250,000
Derby City Council	Cleaner taxis research and engagement programme	29,750
Doncaster Council (with Barnsley MBC, Rotherham MBC and Sheffield City Council)	Demonstration of electric vehicles with a local communication and engagement campaign to increase uptake of Ultra Low Emission Vehicles	100,000
East Herts Council	EV charging and infrastructure improvements and EV car club	163,100
Gateshead Council	Traffic management measures, fleet upgrade and improved cycling infrastructure	395,957
Leeds City Council	Research real-world emissions from road transport refrigeration equipment and possible mitigations	150,000
Leicester City Council	Work-based active travelling local campaign	67,300
London Borough of Islington	Local school focussed awareness and engagement campaign	50,000
Nottingham City Council	Trial of innovative fuel cell technology within the Council's property portfolio	200,000
Nottingham City Council	Improve the uptake of Ultra Low Emission Vehicles in NHS fleet	200,000
Sheffield City Council	Air Aware communications campaign (engaging local GPs, community groups and schools)	50,000
Southampton City Council (with Eastleigh Borough Council)	Supporting the uptake of low emission taxis	253,880
Southampton City Council	Eco-safe driver training and installation of telematics on council fleet	99,000

Local Authority	Project	Amount £
Southampton City Council (with Birmingham City Council, Derby City Council, Leeds City Council, Manchester City Council and Nottingham City Council)	Air quality awareness and engagement campaign	539,120
Westminster City Council (with London Borough of Camden)	Provide advice and toolkits for SMEs to reduce transport emissions from deliveries associated with their operations	54,077
TOTAL		3,687,434

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## **Employers shouldn't be allowed to break their promises on pensions – Debbie Abrahams**

**Debbie Abrahams MP, Labour's Shadow**

**Secretary** of State for Work and Pensions, commented on the Governments Defined Benefit Green Paper, said:

"Moves to allow employers to erode the value of their workers' pensions, which could reportedly cost 11 million pensioners thousands of pounds, are absolutely unacceptable.

"Employers shouldn't be allowed to break their promises on pensions and we will not stand by while the Government gives the green light to companies to downgrade them.

"The Tories are letting older people down, Labour will fight to guarantee a secure retirement."

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## **NPC mulls several laws, prepares for annual session**

China's top legislature Wednesday started its bimonthly session, with lawmakers deliberating revisions to several laws and preparing for the annual

session of the 12th National People's Congress (NPC) in March.

Zhang Dejiang, chairman of the NPC Standing Committee, presided over the opening meeting.

Legislators considered a report on the work of the NPC Standing Committee, which will be submitted to the March session.

They reviewed a draft agenda of the annual session, a draft list of candidates for the session presidium and secretary-general, as well as a list of observers.

They reviewed a report on the qualifications of some NPC deputies and discussed appointments and dismissals.

Lawmakers also deliberated revisions to the law on the Red Cross Society, the law on corporate income tax and the Unfair Competition Law.

### **Law on Red Cross Society**

The draft revisions to the Law on the Red Cross Society aimed to further boost transparency and credibility of the country's Red Cross societies.

According to the new draft, which was brought for a third reading, Red Cross societies in China and their staff are required to give feedback to donors on the use of their donations in line with the law.

Those in charge and staff members directly responsible who fail to do so could face civil and criminal charges, it said.

Meanwhile, a previous clause giving Red Cross societies the power to "rectify" illegal activities carried out by their subordinate societies and staff members was deleted from the new draft.

China's Red Cross has in recent years grappled with trust issues.

Revision work for the Law on the Red Cross Society began in 2015.

The first reading of the draft revision suggested independent third-party agencies should audit donations, while the second draft expanded the Red Cross societies' duties in the donation of stem cells and organs.

The third reading, however, specified that Red Cross societies could "participate in and promote" blood, body and organ donations, and could participate in and carry out "work related to" stem cell donations.

It also said leading supervisors at all Red Cross societies must be chosen through a "democratic process."

The new draft has addressed public concerns and included pertinent revisions to the existing law, Zhang Mingqi, a vice director of the Law Committee of the NPC, told lawmakers Wednesday morning.

It will better safeguard and regulate Red Cross societies in performing their

duties in accordance with the law, and boost its credibility, he said.

At a panel discussion, Shen Yueyue, vice chair of the NPC Standing Committee, said that the revised law is expected to boost the credibility of the country's Red Cross societies and ensure their role in the humanitarian field could be fully played.

### **Unfair competition law**

Lawmakers started to review a draft amendment to the Unfair Competition Law, as the country strives to build a socialist market economy.

The draft revision, the first since the law came into force in 1993, was given a first reading at the bimonthly session.

As the market economy has evolved and new business models have emerged, some of the law's existing clauses do not properly address unfair competition, Zhang Mao, head of the State Administration for Industry and Commerce, told lawmakers.

The draft under consideration expands the scope of unfair competition to cover commercial bribery, false commercial propaganda, tie-in sales without buyer consent, and deceitful prize allocation, according to the draft.

It stipulated that operators can not use the names, branding or titles of established entities.

Bribery or influence to affect the outcome of a deal is banned, according to the draft.

The draft in particular stipulates that malicious activity on the Internet used to coerce buyers or disturb other businesses is also banned.

The banned activity includes misleading, cheating or forcing users to "modify, close or unload" products or services, the draft said.

It also includes products or services that are maliciously designed to not be compatible with other products or services, it noted.

The draft also stated that any activity that seriously disturbs competition order but is not currently covered by laws or regulations should be reported to the State Council, according to the draft.

The State Council will establish a coordination task force tasked with studying major policies against unfair competition.

Violators could face fines up to 3 million yuan (about 436,170 U.S. dollars) or have their business licenses revoked, it said, adding that they could also face criminal charges or have their violations recorded in a credit record system.

A draft amendment to the law on corporate income tax was also submitted to legislators for reading on Wednesday.

The draft is expected to address the common complaint that businesses making large donations do not get enough tax concessions.

The government has waived corporate income tax on donations made by companies from their profits, but this only applies to companies that donate 12 percent of their profits or less.

The new draft stipulates that if a company's donation exceeds the 12 percent in one year, the balance can be deducted from the taxable income over the following three years.

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## **Petroleum Minister visits Myanmar for strengthening Hydrocarbon Relations**

The Minister of State (I/C) for Petroleum and Natural Gas, Shri Dharmendra Pradhan is on an official visit to Myanmar to enhance regional cooperation in the Hydrocarbon sector with the neighbouring country.

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## **DVLA gets out and about to the Motorcycle Trade Expo**

Back in September 2016 we blogged about how DVLA is developing a [new web service](#) for our stakeholder customers to register new vehicles.

Since then we have continued to develop the service based on customer feedback.

Last month Alison Wolley (Corporate Services Relationship Manager) and I were invited to exhibit at the [Motorcycle Trade Expo](#) event in Coventry by the Motorcycle Industry Association.



This is an ideal opportunity to spend time with our customers and chat with them face to face. We set up camp in the 'Knowledge Shop' section of the show – a perfect place to showcase the new service. And that's just what we did during the 3 day event.

We demonstrated and answered lots of queries about all aspects of vehicle registration and licensing. Knowing that there were customers still using our paper process, we were also able to showcase all of the digital services DVLA offers to help dealers registering motorcycles.



Being present at events such as these is invaluable in helping us to get a deeper understanding of the industry in general and it was great to see this reciprocated in the feedback we received about the new service:

- "this will save me a lot of time and money"
- "this is so much easier to use"
- "this looks like a service I could use, I would be able to register the vehicle much quicker to allow my customer to use their bike"

Many thanks to all that took the time to visit us and we look forward to seeing you again soon at another event.

If you want to be involved in testing the new service please contact us at [ved.reform@dvla.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ved.reform@dvla.gsi.gov.uk)

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