



PRESS RELEASE

Mayors and local leaders sign pledge to meet WHO air pollution targets a decade ahead of the UK government

Embargoed

- Mayor of London joins local and regional authorities in signing a letter to the DEFRA Secretary of State pledging to go further than the UK government in tackling the air pollution crisis
- It comes as a National Audit Office report reveals the government is failing to deliver on air quality standards
- Cross-party signatories include London Mayor, Sadiq Khan, Mayor of West Yorkshire, Tracy Brabin, Leader of Wiltshire Council, Richard Clewer, Leader of Bath and North East Somerset Council, Kevin Guy, and Phélim Mac Cafferty, Leader of Brighton & Hove City Council
- The letter pledges mayors and local leaders to adopt WHO air pollution limits for PM2.5 by 2030, ahead of the UK Government's 2040 ambition
- Letter coordinated by UK's only network of local and regional leaders committed to ambitious Net Zero and clean air action
- Sent on Clean Air Day 2022, the letter calls for more support and ambition at the national level to help residents breathe more easily

Cross-party mayors and local leaders from across the UK are today sending a joint letter to the Government pledging to meet World Health Organisation (WHO) targets on deadly air pollution by 2030, a decade ahead of [the UK's current 2040 deadline](#).

The pledge comes as a [new report from the National Audit Office](#), released today, reveals the Government is failing to deliver on air quality standards.

The letter to Environment Secretary, George Eustice, coordinated by UK100 and signed by more than 20 mayors and leaders, including Mayor of London Sadiq Khan, UK100 Co-presidents Tracy Brabin and Richard Clewer, and Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat and Green leaders from across the country, is a joint response to the [Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs consultation on "environmental targets"](#).



[UK100](#) is the UK's only network of ambitious local authority leaders committed to clean air and Net Zero. Earlier this month, the network released a new "[Clean Air Net Zero](#)" report looking at the need to align clean air and Net Zero policies.

The latest intervention comes in the week of Clean Air Day and just weeks after the UK announced plans to [halve the legal limits for the most dangerous air pollutant by 2040](#); PM_{2.5}. Local leaders believe the Government needs to go further, faster.

PM_{2.5} is the deadliest form of particulate matter pollution, a broad term describing the mixture of solids and liquids, including carbon, chemicals, sulphates, nitrates, mineral dust, and water in the air.

PM_{2.5} particles are tiny enough to be invisible to the naked eye and small enough to pass through the lungs, get carried in the bloodstream, and pass into other organs.

Generally, they come from the combustion of solid and liquid fuels, power generation, domestic heating and road vehicles.

Recognising that PM_{2.5} pollution is linked to [thousands of preventable deaths every year in the UK](#), the letter from local leaders calls on the Government to address the "limitations of local authority powers" and introduce a "national policy" to tackle "all of the different sources of PM_{2.5}".

The letter also urges ministers to:

- Bring forward the UK's PM_{2.5} target to 2030 in line with the WHO's interim guideline and provide local leaders with the powers and funding to meet this target.
- Put in place a longer term target to meet the WHO's updated guideline for PM_{2.5} — half of the interim limit.
- Establish a national public awareness campaign around the health impacts of air pollution and its causes, including domestic wood burning.

Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London, says:

"The passing of the new Environment Act last year should have provided the impetus Government needed to tackle some of the most pressing environmental concerns of our age."



“Instead, we’re being offered nothing but more dither and delay as ministers set unambitious targets that condemn yet another generation of children to the risk of developing stunted lungs, asthma and a whole host of other health issues.”

“We’ve done the research, we’re taking the world-leading action, we know that here in London we can achieve the Government’s target for PM2.5 a decade earlier than they are proposing by introducing measures proven to be effective. There is no reason for national government not to match the scale of our ambition for the health of Londoners.”

“The setting of targets should never be seen as an end in and of itself, but strategic and measurable targets can make a huge difference in working to protect our environment and our city’s residents from the consequences of pollution. That is why I urge ministers to think again about the scope of these targets and commit to doing much more to protect the next generation from the scourge of toxic air.”

Tracy Brabin, Mayor of West Yorkshire and UK100 Co-president, says:

“Within West Yorkshire, we’re doing everything in our power to clean up the air – including investing in electric buses, electric vehicle charging points and helping people to walk and cycle more.”

“But one in twenty deaths in our region is linked to poor air quality and that is why it’s crucial that we meet the WHO’s target for PM_{2.5} by 2030.”

“As local leaders, we understand the need to work across both political and geographical borders, and we want to work with the Government to ensure our residents can breathe easily and safely.”

Richard Clewer, Leader of Wiltshire Council and UK100 Co-president, says:

“It isn’t just our big cities that have air quality problems. There are parts of Wiltshire which are impacted, for example, Westbury where lorries constantly run on the A350 directly outside of people’s front doors.”

“Councils have some ability to influence pollution, but we need more support from government legislation to reduce all forms of particulate pollution. Some of our problems are on the A36, a road managed by National Highways, which also means that government assistance is critical to tackling those issues. If we are to properly act as good stewards of the environment we need to look to reduce pollution wherever we can.”



Phélim Mac Cafferty, Leader of Brighton & Hove City Council, says:

“We’re taking ambitious action in Brighton & Hove to tackle air pollution and battle climate change. The city’s [Carbon Neutral 2030 programme](#) will improve air quality through expanding our public Bikeshare scheme, making it easier to walk, upgrading the exhausts of forty buses, purchasing four new electric refuse collection vehicles, developing a hydrogen fuel hub and rolling out e-cargo bikes. We’re doing all of this and more while we work with schools and businesses to spread awareness about the serious dangers of toxic air.”

“We’re close to achieving the 2010 World Health Organisation guidelines for fine particulate pollution in outdoor air and doing everything we can to ensure clean, safe air. But we need strong national legislation to support our efforts. So we fully support the call for ministers to go further and faster to clean up air.”

“It’s crucial that we meet the World Health Organization’s recommended guidelines for air quality levels by 2030. Not only will this set us on a pathway to clean air across the UK, but it will also deliver significant improvements for public health, the economy, and the climate.”

Kevin Guy, Leader of Bath and North East Somerset Council, says:

“I fully support UK100’s request for this government to take a robust position with respect to setting targets on particulate matter pollution. In Bath we have already seen improvements in air quality since introducing a Clean Air Zone.”

“Bath’s zone was launched in March last year and is helping to reduce nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) pollution. We have yet to receive the formal assessment from the Joint Air Quality Unit, but our data shows that NO₂ concentrations in the zone have reduced by 21% since the baseline year, 2019 (pre-Covid). This is despite traffic flows in Bath largely returning to pre-pandemic levels by the middle of the year and significant highway works.”

“Air quality and traffic flows have been monitored outside of the zone to determine if the charges have simply displaced traffic and associated emissions, but our findings show that NO₂ concentrations in the urban area outside of the zone (but within Bath, Bathampton and Batheaston) have reduced by 22% since 2019.”

Polly Billington, Chief Executive, UK100, adds:



"Local and regional leaders throughout the country, and across the political divide, are desperate to clean up the air in their towns and cities. But they can't do it alone. I urge the Environment Secretary to listen to this plea from local authorities and give them the support they need to take decisive action."

"As the National Audit Office's report makes clear, the Government needs to urgently step-up its action on clean air and bring forward its goal to meet WHO guidelines. At the same time, ministers need to enable local leaders to meet their air quality ambitions by providing the powers and support they need to implement regional air pollution plans that mean residents can breathe easily."

"Action on clean air comes with added benefits. Many of the measures that will help the UK progress on cleaning up our air will also accelerate action on Net Zero, cut health costs, enhance our economy and improve everyone's quality of life."

In July, UK100 will join the Mayor of West Yorkshire, Tracy Brabin, to convene a conference of local and regional leaders and mayors from up and down the country to accelerate local clean air and Net Zero progress and turn declarations into delivery.

The **Local Net Zero Delivery Summit 2022: From Declaration to Delivery** will take place at NEXUS in Leeds on 14 July.

ENDS

More information: Liam Ward, UK100, liam.ward@uk100.org +44 (0)7456 554103

Information on signatories

Leadership	Authority
	Leeds City Council
	Liverpool City Region / Mayor of Liverpool
	Bristol City Council / Mayor of Bristol
	Leicester City Council
	Oxford City Council
	Cambridge City Council
	Newcastle City Council



	Nottingham City Council
	Bath and NE Somerset
	SYCA / Mayor of South Yorkshire
Minority	Brighton and Hove
Coalition	Oxfordshire County Council
Coalition	Swale
	Hertfordshire
	Wiltshire
Coalition	Cambridgeshire
Coalition	Lancaster
Coalition	York
	WYCA / Mayor of West Yorkshire
	GLA / Mayor of London
	Cornwall

About UK100

UK100 is a network of the most ambitious local leaders working towards Net Zero as soon as possible but no later than 2045. We help them collaborate to take decisive action in their communities.

Our members represent more than 37 million people in towns, cities and counties across the UK.

We facilitate knowledge-sharing between members, partnership-building and leadership mentoring. And support them to harness their collective power to affect vital national change.

Warm homes, affordable energy, clean air, and healthy landscapes make thriving communities.

And UK100 members have pledged to deliver a Net Zero future that delivers for people and planet.

[UK100.org](https://www.uk100.org)



UK100 members across the UK

