Local leadership on clean air: The best action on air pollution from cities across England
Launched by UK100 and Clean Air Day at the National Clean Air Summit 2018
“Air pollution is a national health crisis. As Mayor, I’m doing everything in my power to protect Londoners from filthy air. City Hall has moved fast by introducing the Toxicity “T-Charge”, cleaning up our taxis and buses, and speeding up the introduction of the world’s first Ultra Low-Emission Zone in central London to April 2019. We have now announced my decision to expand the ULEZ up to the North/South circular roads in 2021. Local leaders around the country are taking steps to improve air quality and I look forward to working with them in the interests of our city and country, and to push for a new national Clean Air Act.”

- Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London

“As a country we need to get a grip on air pollution, not just to improve our health but to improve our economic prospects. The demand for cleaner vehicles is global, and we are already making them here. In the West Midlands, we’ve made significant progress but we need the Government’s help to enable us to take this to the next level; that means even greater investment, powers and devolution to accelerate the work currently taking place.”

- Andy Street, Mayor of the West Midlands

“Air quality is one of the biggest issues facing us as a city-region. I want a cleaner, greener, healthier future for Manchester - one that harnesses our industrial traditions to seize the opportunity to lead the world on this. The solutions to this crisis exist, and we have the political will to make them a reality. What we need is more joined-up thinking at a national level - and that's where Ministers can make a real difference.”

- Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester
Introduction:

Air pollution is a solvable problem. We’ve done it before. In the 1950s, when our air was dirty from soot and coal smoke, we passed a national Clean Air Act which set a new standard for health and showed the way for other countries. It’s time we did the same with air pollution today.

For too long the adverse impacts of diesel engines have been met with a shrug and the wider opportunities of ensuring that we have clean air as a result of a prosperous economy haven’t been realised. Poor public health isn’t a price we should be willing to pay for modern living — we can get around just as well without having such a bad impact on our lungs. This is why leaders of cities and towns, districts and boroughs across the UK are acting.

UK100 is a network of local government leaders committed to 100% clean energy and clean air. As demonstrated in these pages, our members are working locally in partnership to reduce emissions from industry, switching to zero-emission vehicles, pedestrianising town centres, bringing communities together and getting more people out of their cars and onto their bikes or their feet.

This document illustrates the why and the how of local leadership on clean air. But there’s so much more to do. This is a national problem that needs a national vision and coordinated action. Businesses and consumers need consistency; to know they won’t unwittingly contribute to air pollution.

So while we celebrate the very best of local action, we know clean air for everyone will only come about when everyone does their bit — including national government. Only then can we solve the problem of dirty air just as we did 60 years ago.
What we need

UK100’s network of city leaders are committed to playing their part in an ambitious national plan for clean air. This plan must ensure that local action is adequately supported by activity across Government to tackle air pollution and must include:

- **A modern Clean Air Act** that establishes strong air quality limits linked to WHO-recommended guidelines, enforced by an independent statutory body. The Act should also grant local and regional authorities the powers and resources they need, while ensuring action at a national level to tackle all sources of air pollution, including from construction, buildings, transport, wood-burning and maritime sources.

- **A targeted national vehicle renewal scheme** to replace older polluting vehicles that supports drivers and businesses to change to low-emission vehicles and other sustainable forms of transport, taking special care that those on low incomes and also small businesses are helped to make the shift.

- **An enhanced Clean Air Fund** open to all towns and cities in England funded by UK Government and motor vehicle manufacturers, sufficient to support the delivery of Clean Air Zones and provide investment for cleaner buses and taxis along with walking, cycling and public transport.

- **Support for businesses to innovate clean transport technology** and enable the UK to be a global leader in manufacturing low-emission vehicles post-Brexit as part of the Road to Zero Transport, Clean Growth and Industrial Strategies. This should include a commitment to phase out sales of new pure diesel and petrol cars and vans by 2030. To ensure the role out of the vital electric vehicle infrastructure needed to support this, cities should have the power to install charge points at petrol stations and private car parks.
Birmingham, once at the heart of the industrial revolution, is now a thriving business hub with a vibrant and diverse culture. Yet, like all other UK cities, it has a problem with air pollution.

One of the many ways Birmingham is tackling this is with a different sort of revolution - a cycling one. Birmingham Cycle Revolution (BCR) is an award-winning scheme to make cycling mainstream in the city. As well as investment in cycling facilities, 20mph speed limits in residential areas, and upgraded canal towpaths, Birmingham City Council has given away 5,500 bikes to get people to shift from four wheels to two.

The Big Birmingham Bikes scheme prioritised residents living in the city’s poorest areas, with every new owner completing a course in bike riding and maintenance. The first 3,500 bikes given away have already clocked up more than 300,000 miles; improving mental health and fitness as well as air pollution.

To make sure families can get out cycling together, the city has also launched a Bike Bank. This bike loan scheme lets children borrow a bike that fits, and then swap it when it doesn’t.

“Big Birmingham Bikes has given us the chance to cycle as a family. My son and I learnt to ride through the scheme last year, and now we get to spend more time together and get healthier and fitter at the same time!”

- Mum-of-two and Birmingham resident
Bradford is a city with an industrial heritage and a bright future. Its popularity has seen the city grow faster than any other outside of London, but with growth comes increased pollution.

Bradford was the first city in West Yorkshire, and the second in the country, to adopt a low-emission strategy aimed at reducing pollution and improving health in the city. But air pollution doesn’t respect city lines so Bradford Council knew it couldn’t do this alone.

Alongside neighbouring councils, the Combined Authority and Public Health England, Bradford led the development of the West Yorkshire Low-emission Strategy (WYLES), published in 2016.

The WYLES has introduced planning guidance which ensures EV charging points are built into new projects and it has improved bus standards, taxi licensing commitments and procurement guidance. It has also enabled regional bids for emission-reduction funding for projects such as bus retrofit and low-emission taxis.

By working with others, Bradford Council has created a culture of collective responsibility which has raised ambitions and ensured consistent and tangible air quality improvement across the region.

“We know the links between air pollution and health and this is why we’ve made air quality improvement a council priority. Working collaboratively with other authorities has helped us tackle air quality issues across the region. Together we can make sure Bradford remains a great place to live, work and invest.”

- Cllr Susan Hinchcliffe, Leader of Bradford Council
Bristol is famous for hot air balloons — the city makes more than anywhere else in the world, and even has its own festival to celebrate them. No surprises then that Bristol City Council takes its air very seriously.

Since becoming the UK's first European Green Capital, Bristol has developed strong partnerships with the private sector to unlock investment in sustainable transport in the city and beyond.

Bristol City Council's partnership with First West of England, the largest bus operator in Bristol, has seen more than 150 buses switch to low-emission or low carbon, with much more to come — including biogas-powered buses and refuelling infrastructure. Investment plans are in place to transform the entire local fleet in the next few years to Euro VI standard.

Bus use continues to grow in the city, bucking the national trend. First West of England has seen passenger numbers increase by more than 10% every year since 2012. To meet growing demand, one of the largest ever rapid public transport systems - Metrobus — was launched and it is set to transform bus travel in the Bristol region.

“In the past few years we have made some significant steps forward when it comes to reducing harmful air pollution and, at the same time, radically changing the travel habits of thousands of people in our city region. This is to ensure we are all better connected, linking up people with jobs and each other.”

- Cllr Mhairi Threlfall, Cabinet Member for Transport, Bristol City Council
Leicester has attracted worldwide attention for the discovery of a King, a trophy-winning football team and its innovative approach to people-friendly streets. But this wasn’t always the story. Decades of car-centric planning had left the city divided and choked by a major ring road, and a challenge to traverse by car, foot or bike.

Over the last seven years however, a new vision has seen the city centre reclaimed. Under Mayor Sir Peter Soulsby, city centre streets have been redesigned to provide safer and more attractive routes for pedestrians and cyclists, and new public squares.

The multi-million pound Connecting Leicester project has doubled cycling and walking rates, with an estimated 18,000 people now using bikes regularly. The city has had the fastest business growth outside of London and is considered one of the UK’s hottest property markets.

Connecting Leicester’s success has been built on a clear vision, strong political will and funding from a wide range of sources – Heritage Lottery funding and EU grants among them.

“The changes we’re making are transforming Leicester into a much more liveable and people-friendly place. Since the Connecting Leicester programme began we’ve seen clear benefits to the local economy. What’s good for people – a clean, healthy and attractive city – is also good for business and the future prosperity of Leicester.”

- Sir Peter Soulsby, Mayor of Leicester
Liverpool is a city shaped by its port, its people and its creative, industrial and sporting history. But it is also now being shaped by a problem with air pollution and Mayor Joe Anderson’s plan to tackle it.

By 2025 Liverpool will have a “central heart” where walking, cycling, electric vehicles and clean fuels will dominate while also encouraging people to get out of cars and onto public transport.

Launched in 2017, the Better by Bus campaign is an alliance between Merseytravel, Arriva and Stagecoach. It hopes to encourage more people onto the city’s buses with awareness-raising in schools, reduced fares for young people, free Wi-Fi, USB charging points and a modern electric fleet.

The results are already speaking for themselves. Annual bus passenger journeys have risen by 11 million in the first year. Customer satisfaction levels are higher in Liverpool than many other cities, with 92% of bus passengers satisfied or very satisfied with their journeys. Liverpool’s buses also now have 30% lower emissions thanks to the new cleaner fleet.

“I have a car at home, but I would much rather get the bus. When you drive, you have to worry about paying for parking and the cost of petrol, whereas on the bus I can just sit back and relax. Many of the buses I get are now either hybrid or fully electric, which I think is fantastic — we should all start taking the bus more often.”

- Jane, a bus user from Liverpool
While great public transport infrastructure is vital to cleaning up our cities, London’s iconic red buses contribute significantly to the city’s air pollution problem. However, this is set to change with a targeted transport initiative that is already making a big difference in areas where pollution is at its worst.

Mayor Sadiq Khan’s Low Emission Bus Zones will bar all but the cleanest buses from certain routes; 12 in total will eventually be launched in bad air quality hotspots. The first was along Putney High Street, and the second sited between Brixton Road and Streatham High Road.

The Putney route, launched in March 2017, has seen a 90% reduction in hourly pollution level breaches and a 40% reduction in annual NO2 concentrations at Putney High Street.

The zones represent the most extensive network of clean buses in any major world city. All 12 zones are set to be completed by 2019, meaning thousands of school children will benefit given that 172 schools are located within 100m of the new zones.

“This is yet another important stepping stone on the way to making the Mayor’s vision of a less polluted cleaner capital come true. Greener buses will help transform air quality and make for a more welcoming town centre.”

- Claire Mann, Director of Bus Operations, Transport for London
In a bid to clean up the city’s air, Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) took part in national Clean Air Day in 2017. TfGM hosted a wide range of activities across the city aimed at raising awareness among residents and businesses.

To tackle pollution from transport, TfGM encouraged drivers to switch off their engines when stationary near schools. Backed by Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester, the campaign installed hundreds of anti-idling roadside signs, and ran an awareness campaign in local media and on social media calling for people to “engine off when you stop”.

In Greater Manchester, 39 schools took part with the children learning about air pollution, its sources and its impact. Pupils from Gorse Hall Primary counted 186 cars, and one bus, passing their school in just 15 minutes. They made posters championing clean air and a video that was shown to parents.

The anti-idling campaign had an impact beyond the school gates. After taking part in Clean Air Day 2017, Manchester University NHS Trust made no-idling part of the induction for their contractors, making sure that anyone working on their sites doesn’t idle their vehicle.

“If we could see the invisible exhaust fumes we all breathe in every day, I’m sure we’d be horrified. Air pollution is an invisible menace and one which our young people are particularly vulnerable to.”

- Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester
Newcastle has developed from a major shipbuilding, manufacturing and export hub to a centre of business, arts and sciences. This spirit of innovation is at the heart of the city’s efforts to tackle air pollution.

Newcastle was the first place in England to install a pollution-busting ‘moss tree’ — a city bench with the ability to absorb as much pollution as a small forest.

The structure can filter pollutants equivalent to almost 300 trees. The moss is built into the ‘moss tree’ structure, which provides the water – largely harvested from rain – and the shade the moss needs to survive.

The initiative on the city’s busy bus interchange is a partnership between Newcastle City Council and Northumbrian Water Group, but it will do more than just cut pollution. It contains built-in sensors to gather information on pollution and monitor air humidity, temperature and rainfall too. The results will be made available to universities to help with research on tackling pollution.

“In Newcastle, like many cities, poor air quality is having a significant impact on our health, wellbeing and quality of life. We have to tackle this. Having England’s first moss tree in Newcastle is hugely exciting. I look forward to seeing how the information it will provide can be used to inform ways in which we can improve air quality.”

- Cllr Arlene Ainsley, Cabinet Member for Transport and Air Quality,
  Newcastle City Council
Nottingham

Nottingham has many claims to fame. Ibuprofen, traffic lights, Raleigh Bikes and HP Sauce all hail from the medieval city. Lesser known is the fact that it was the first place in the Northern Hemisphere to bring in a workplace parking levy in a bid to cut traffic congestion.

Nottingham City Council introduced its award-winning scheme in 2012. It applies to employers with 11 or more parking spaces who can choose to either pay the levy themselves, or pass it onto their employees.

The levy has brought about a step change in public transport for the city. The £44m raised in the first five years enabled the leveraging of enough funds to double the size of the city's tram network, redevelop Nottingham Station, and support one of Europe's largest fleets of electric buses.

And while there have been concerns, local businesses understood the need for transport improvements and the levy has seen 100% compliance. There is no evidence of businesses having left the city, or ruled out locating there, as a result.

“We introduced the Workplace Parking Levy as a way to reduce reliance on the car and make it easier to get around the city. It’s a key part of our work to keep Nottingham moving. Less traffic and improved public transport is better for residents, better for businesses, and better for everybody.”

- Cllr David Liversidge, Portfolio Holder for Transport and HR, Nottingham City Council
Each day people across Oxford are breathing in toxic air. About 70% of the air pollution in the city comes from transport, so proposals have been put forward to create the world’s first Zero Emissions Zone (ZEZ).

Starting in 2020, the ZEZ would see certain vehicles banned on a small number of streets, then — as vehicle technology develops — consign all petrol and diesel vehicles across the city centre to the history books.

Being the first at anything means tackling big challenges. Oxford City Council is focused on making sure the city’s business community is supported to make the transition to a zero-emissions economy.

The City Council has attracted £3.25m of government funding to install electric vehicle charging points for residents, taxis and businesses, and to upgrade buses to be ultra-low or zero-emission. This is just the beginning. Reduced parking fees for electric vehicles, electric taxi-only ranks, and electric delivery vehicle-only loading areas are all being considered with partners as part of the ZEZ plans.

“Oxford will become the world’s first Zero Emissions Zone because there is no such thing as a safe and legal limit on toxic air pollutants, especially on the health of the vulnerable. The Zero Emission Zone will help tackle health inequalities in the city, something we’re dedicated to achieving.”

- Cllr Tom Hayes, Board Member for Safer, Greener Environment, Oxford City Council
Despite the sea breezes, Southampton has some of the worst levels of air pollution in the country. To tackle it, Southampton City Council is taking a joined-up approach with an innovative community and stakeholder engagement scheme.

Southampton’s Clean Air Network (CAN) is bringing ferry companies, taxi firms and local businesses together with schools, employees of the local authority and residents to share ideas on how to clean up Southampton's air.

In just three months CAN has attracted 100 members. Together they’ve launched an anti-idling project with a social media campaign and large billboards placed on some of the worst roads in Southampton for idling engines. They’ve also trained volunteers across the city to convince drivers of the benefits of switching their engines off when stationary.

The City Council hopes CAN will not only be a place for sharing ideas and positive community engagement — CAN is hosting a festival on National Clean Air Day (21 June 2018) — but that it will also act as the key vehicle for consulting and discussing upcoming plans for a Clean Air Zone.

“Just because you or I don’t personally drive a big lorry through the city, it doesn’t mean we have no responsibility — we all buy goods that come off of those lorries every day. We all contribute to the issue of air quality in Southampton and are all responsible for finding a solution by changing our attitudes and behaviours.”

- Cllr Christopher Hammond, Leader, Southampton City Council
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UK100 is a highly ambitious network of local government leaders, which seeks to devise and implement plans for clean air and the transition to 100% clean energy that are ambitious, cost effective and take the public and business with them.

UK100 is the only network for local authorities focused solely on climate, energy and clean air policy. It connects local leaders to each other, to business and to national government, enabling them to showcase their achievements, learn from each other and speak collectively to accelerate the transition to clean energy and clean air locally and nationally.

UK100’s goal is to translate the growing public demand for clean air into political action. Working across civil society, the public sector and business, UK100 is calling for legislation that enshrines the right to breathe clean air into law and makes the UK a world leader in clean technologies and solutions.

Already, 89 local leaders have joined UK100 and more are signing up. The shift to clean energy and clean air is happening right here in the UK.
Launched by UK100 and Clean Air Day at the National Clean Air Summit 2018