

Proposal for a high level Clean Air Commission.

60 Years on from the great Clean Air Act of 1956.

The Clean Air Alliance called today for a major new initiative to tackle the health problems resulting from air pollution.

In a letter to Andrea Leadsom, the new Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Dan Byles, the Chairman of the Clean Air Alliance, said,

“We are today proposing to you and your colleagues the establishment of a high level Clean Air Commission to create a new momentum for the urgently needed action to tackle air pollution in our cities and countryside and to clean up the air we all breathe.

Recent medical reports have demonstrated conclusively that air pollution is a major public health problem in the UK, responsible for thousands of early deaths and a great deal of ill health. There is a growing demand for more vigorous action to improve air quality.

Air pollution affects all parts of the country but is particularly acute in some of the poorest and most deprived urban areas where illness is more prevalent and life expectancy is lower. Focusing especially on the air quality problems in those areas could play a significant part in the goal of improving the quality of life for all in an equitable way.

Some changes are already in hand. But they are proceeding too slowly and in too uncoordinated a way to make the impact needed. The members of the Clean Air Alliance believe that UK is currently at a tipping point where an acceleration of action on air quality is achievable and desirable, and could have major health, environmental, economic and business benefits.

In order to drive this forward the Clean Air Alliance is calling for the establishment of a high level Commission to create a consistent and co-ordinated plan of action and to build an effective working partnership between all the public and private sector bodies involved to implement it.

Some commentators have fears that BREXIT may lead to a diminution of the protection given by EU legislation to air quality and to vehicle emission

standards. The Clean Air Alliance prefers rather to see this as an opportunity to take back control of our British atmosphere, and to ensure that Government, business, local authorities and the British people as a whole work together creatively to make our British air once again amongst the cleanest and healthiest in the world.

60 years ago, after the Great Smog of 1952, the Conservative Government of the day set up a high powered Commission under Sir Hugh Beaver to tackle the air pollution problems of those days. The report of that body won widespread all party support and provided the blueprint for the great Clean Air Act of 1956 – one of the more successful and lasting legacies of the Eden Government. Our proposal seeks to emulate and amplify that success. It should create an integrated action plan to deal with today’s pollution problems, and provide the basis for any new Clean Air legislation that may be needed.”

Notes to editors

About the Clean Air Alliance

The Clean Air Alliance UK was formed in 2015 following an Environment Protection UK initiative to act as a broad partnership of different interests all with the common aim of improving air quality and working towards healthier air. It comprises environmental interest groups, companies, public bodies and academic institutions.

The overall mission of the Alliance is to accelerate progress towards clean and healthy air. It complements existing activities of its partners and supports them through a wide network of companies, public bodies, organisations and individuals.

www.cleanairalliance.co.uk

About Environmental Protection UK

Environmental Protection UK (formerly the National Society for Clean Air) is a long-established national charity that provides expert policy analysis and advice on air quality, land quality, waste and noise and their effects on people and communities and deals with a wide range of issues and policy areas including public health, planning, transport, energy and climate.

EPUK brings together policy-makers, business, local authorities and academics to enable and foster successful partnerships for environmental action. It promotes integrated and effective policies and workable solutions to pressing environmental challenges.

Environmental Protection UK works with and for UK national and devolved governments, local authorities, business, academics and the general public, and with relevant EU institutions and NGOs.

www.environmental-protection.org.uk

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