

SERA

The logo for SERA Labour Environment Campaign is integrated into the letter 'R' of the word 'SERA'. It features a green circle with a white dot inside, followed by the text 'SERA' in a bold, sans-serif font, and 'Labour Environment Campaign' in a smaller, lighter font below it.

LABOUR'S ENVIRONMENT
CAMPAIGN

A BREATH OF FRESH AIR



In a few months' time, the UK Government is once again being taken to the European Court for their failure to act on air pollution. In the meantime, thousands more people will die from the air they breathe.

Back in the 1950s, as well as giving councils the powers to establish smoke control zones, the Clean Air Act also championed firm action including offering grants so householders could convert their coal-burning fires to smokeless fuel.

We need the same level of commitment to saving people's lives today, which is why for the Clean Air Act's 60th Anniversary we are announcing 'A Breath of Fresh Air' SERA's clean air campaign to help secure the Clean Air Act the UK desperately needs.

MELANIE SMALLMAN & JAKE SUMNER
Co-Chair's of SERA

People shouldn't be dying from the air they breathe in 21st Century Britain. The Government needs to act to stop this now.

That is why I am calling for a new Clean Air Act, to give local authorities and city regions the powers they need to curb air pollution.

LEONIE COOPER AM
Chair of the London Assembly Environment Committee
and SERA Executive Member

Air pollution is the UK's leading environmental health risk and needs concerted action at all levels.

This should be supported through a new Clean Air Act, fit for purpose to enable us to breathe clean, safe air across our country - particularly in our most polluted cities, from London to Leeds, and Birmingham to Bristol and Brighton.

MATTHEW PENNYCOOK MP
Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group
on Air Pollution





A CLEAN AIR ACT FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Sixty years ago today on the 5th July 1956 the UK Government passed the Clean Air Act.

Introduced in the aftermath of the London Great Smog disaster when as many as 12,000 people died due to air pollution, the Act regulated domestic and industrial smoke emissions.

Today, while we are no longer worried about smoke from coal fires, air pollution – primarily from diesel vehicles – causes the premature deaths of more than 40,000 people annually in the UK. After smoking, it is the biggest public health risk and claims more lives than alcohol and obesity combined.

Across the world, according to the World Health Organisation, it caused seven million premature deaths in 2012. If the current trends continue air pollution is set to overtake poor sanitation and polluted drinking water as a cause of death by 2050.

That is why SERA has launched a petition calling for a new Clean Air Act, and a clean air campaign 'A Breath of Fresh Air' that will drive ambitious policies for inclusion in the Clean Air Act for the 21st Century.

HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

Over the coming months 'A Breath of Fresh Air', SERA's clean air campaign will be building support for an act, encouraging research, shaping policy changes and actions including outlining the additional powers councils and administrations need, and host discussions with key organisations. This will help enable a bold, robust and ambitious Clean Air Act that is fit for the 21st Century. Add your voice to make this happen.

1.

ASK YOUR MP TO SUPPORT THE CAMPAIGN

The support of elected representatives, from local to national government, will be crucial in building and delivering a Clean Air Act for the 21st Century.

A template email can be found on the SERA website in the 'Help Spread the Word' post.

2.

HELP SPREAD THE WORD ON SOCIAL MEDIA

SERA will be promoting the petition calling for a new Clean Air Act and 'A Breath of Fresh Air' on social media.

Help put pressure on the government to act and raise awareness by sharing, retweeting and spreading the word.

3.

JOIN SERA OR DONATE

SERA relies on donations and membership fees to support our policy work and activities.

If you would like to help fund our air quality work you can donate by clicking here. Thank you.

4. SIGN OUR PETITION

Alongside 'A Breath of Fresh Air' we have launched a UK Government and Parliament Petition.

The petition calls on the government to produce a Clean Air Act for the 21st Century, and help prevent the 40,000 plus premature deaths every year.

If the petition gets 10,000 signatures the Government must respond, and if it gets 100,000 signatures it will be considered for debate in Parliament.

To sign the petition, either scan the QR code or visit <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/158816>.





WHY IS AIR QUALITY IMPORTANT?

The facts are alarming. Globally upwards of 5.5 million deaths a year are caused by air pollution, making it the world's largest environmental health risk.

On the European continent air pollution is the number one environmental cause of death. Responsible for approximately 600,000 premature deaths annually with a yearly cost of £1.05trillion.

Air pollution in the UK contributes to between 40,000 to 50,000 early deaths every year with over 9,500 of those in London, Europe's most polluted city. This year it took just four days for Oxford Street, the worlds most polluted street, to exceed the legal level of pollution for the whole of 2016.

For these reasons the World Health Organisation (WHO) has now declared there is a global "public health emergency" from pollution, with severe financial implications for governments.

In 2015 the WHO estimated that the UK suffers just under £54 billion in economic costs a year associated with air pollution. Around £15-20 billion of the economic costs are the health impacts and represent around 7% of the National Health Service budget.

The challenge is clear. Inaction and delay will have dire social and economic consequences. We must act now.

WHAT CAUSES AIR POLLUTION?

Air pollution is caused by many domestic and industrial activities.

A large volume of UK air pollution today comes from combustion, particularly diesel engines. It is visible as a dull orange-grey smog that develops when fumes get trapped.

It is produced by sunlight reacting with nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds (VOC) in the atmosphere. When sunlight hits these chemicals, they form airborne particles and the result is ground-level ozone or smog.

Overall, diesel cars emit less hydrocarbons, carbon monoxide and lead pollution than petrol cars, but produce more noxious gases and significantly more fine particulates.

COMBATING CLIMATE CHANGE

Air pollution plays a key role in combating climate change and without action places our food, air, and water at risk.

We know air pollution directly contributes to global warming. Tackling it could cut the global average temperature by 0.5 degree celsius, and be a vital step to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees as set out in the Paris Agreement.

Clean fuels, cleaner vehicles, a greater use of public transport, more walking and cycling schemes, less polluting buildings and more tree planting are just some of the ways we can tackle the world's largest environmental challenges and health risks.

In the future all governments must not take policy approaches that favour either climate change mitigation or improving air quality, they must do both.

WILL WE STILL HAVE THE RIGHT TO CLEAN AIR?

Air pollution was one of the first environmental problems to be addressed by the European Union.

EU law has recognised that clean air is essential to good health and put in place legal protections through directives and court judgements.

Over time the EU directives have become progressively more strict on levels of harmful air pollution.

In 2008, the most recent Air Quality Directive, the EU required member states to monitor and assess air quality, report to the European Commission and public on those results, and implement air quality plans.

When legal limits are breached EU citizens have the right to go to the national courts to demand action.

IMPROVE HEALTH AND WELLBEING

With a £15-20 billion health impact cost air pollution is a UK public health crisis.

By reducing air pollution levels we can reduce the economic cost on our NHS from strokes, heart disease, lung cancer, and both chronic and acute respiratory diseases, including asthma caused by long-term exposure.

Poor air quality has a particularly disproportionate effect on the most vulnerable in our society (the young, older people and adults with heart and respiratory conditions) who tend to live near main roads where pollution is worse, thereby exacerbating health and wellbeing inequalities.

Studies have now shown a link between clean air, green spaces and walking and cycling with better mental health and quality of life.

WHAT WILL BE THE IMPACT OF BREXIT ON AIR QUALITY?

The consequence of the UK's vote to leave the European Union will have many environmental ramifications, especially for air quality.

For years the UK has breached EU limits on nitrogen dioxide, leading ClientEarth to take multiple legal actions in the Supreme Court. Just last year the Supreme Court ordered the government to create an Air Quality Plan. Following its publication, ClientEarth are now suing the government again for "woefully inadequate" plans.

Losing the ability of EU Citizens to go before a national court to demand action, which has been permitted to date, will leave UK air quality law much weaker. Alongside the Conservative Government opposing moves to tighten controls on air quality, as recently as June, it is evident that we must campaign for a Clean Air Act which enshrines EU air quality law.

ECONOMIC COSTS

Air pollution damages not only our nation's health, but also our economic wellbeing.

It is clear that reducing air pollution will lead to significant socio-economic wellbeing benefits, and dramatically reduce the current £54 billion economic costs annually of poor UK air quality.

Cleaner air will contribute substantially to the long term competitiveness of the UK economy, by improving work productivity and increasing productive capacity in industries like farming and tourism.

Accepting the challenge and tackling air pollution will create green jobs, drive innovation in latest technologies like clean fuels, and attract international investment to a cleaner, greener UK.



THE UK & AIR POLLUTION

Air pollution is silently and prematurely killing between 40,000 to 50,000 UK citizens every year, with over 9,500 of those in London, at an economic cost of just under £54 billion.

SERA has been campaigning on air quality for many years. In 2013 we ran a successful campaign to stop the Government abandoning the National Air Quality Monitoring network and we are proud of the work that we have done with others to ensure that pollution was one of the key issues for this year's London Mayoral Elections.

Since being elected the new Labour Mayor of London Sadiq Khan has displayed strong leadership on clean air. Today, on the 60th Anniversary of the Clean Air Act, Sadiq has announced the toughest crackdown on the most polluting vehicles in any major city in the world including: a T-Charge by 2017, expansion of the Ultra Low Emissions Zones, and a faster role out of cleaner buses. Sadiq's agenda on air pollution should be replicated across the country at next year's metro-Mayoral elections.

Tackling air pollution is a serious issue for Labour campaigners across the UK, and overleaf we set out the extent of the UK's air quality crisis. It isn't just an environmental issue – it's one of social justice too.

UK TOWNS & CITIES

London, Birmingham and Leeds have been in breach of EU safety limits on NO₂ for over five years. In 2014 the government projected that they will still be exceeding European limits until at least 2030.

The same 2014 government study also projected that Tyneside, Liverpool, Nottingham, Sheffield and Bristol would not be compliant with nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) levels until 2025.

In light of the long-term breaches ClientEarth took legal action against the government in 2011. On 1 May 2013 the Supreme Court declared that the government was failing in its duty to protect people from harmful effects of air pollution, and must produce an air quality plan.

The government's 2015 Air Quality Plan committed to introduce 'Clean Air Zones' to Birmingham, Leeds, Nottingham, Derby, and Southampton by 2020. In order to discourage the most polluting buses, taxis, coaches and lorries.

The Clean Air Zone proposals are part of the government's order from the Supreme Court to cut emissions of NO₂ after 88% of UK zones were shown to be in breach of EU limits.

The measures set out in the plan project all but one of the UK's 43 zones meeting the NO₂ limit by 2020. Greater London is projected to be compliant by 2025 under the plan.

In May the WHO published a list (right) of UK towns and cities in breach of the safe PM_{2.5} (39) and PM₁₀ (10) limit levels.

Particulate Matter (PM) is the term for the particles found in the air. PM_{2.5} fine particles can pass from your lungs into your blood supply. PM_{2.5} is often referred to as 'the invisible killer'.

UK TOWNS & CITIES BREACHING PM₁₀

Eastbourne
Glasgow
Leeds
London
Nottingham
Oxford
Port Talbot
Scunthorpe
Southampton
Stanford-Le-Hope

UK TOWNS & CITIES BREACHING PM_{2.5}

Armagh
Belfast
Birkenhead
Birmingham
Brighton
Bristol
Cardiff
Carlisle
Chepstow
Eastbourne
Glasgow
Hull
Leamington Spa
Leeds
Liverpool
London
Londonderry
Manchester
Middlesbrough
Newport
Norwich
Nottingham
Oxford
Plymouth
Port Talbot
Portsmouth
Prestonpans
Salford
Saltash
Scunthorpe
Southampton
Southend
Stanford-Le-Hope
Stoke-on-Trent
Swansea
Thurrock
Warrington
Wigan
York





EU rules have been turned to time and time again to hold the British government to account on air pollution. After the Referendum vote, these protections are in serious peril. If we lose them, a new Clean Air Act will become even more critical to avoid the tragic loss of lives in UK cities.

The inconvenient truth for those who sought to argue the environmental benefits of a Britain outside the EU, is that air pollution has an unfortunate habit of not respecting borders: over one-third of the UK's air pollution is blown in from across the English Channel.

Cross-border co-operation and common laws across European countries will be crucial, whether Britain is part of the EU or not, in ensuring we do not end up with a race to the bottom on environmental standards. Any new regulation in the UK must reflect this reality.

SEB DANCE MEP

Member of the European Parliament's Committee on Environment, Public Health, and Food Safety

We've got to take urgent action on air quality. Southampton is one of the UK cities identified as having unacceptable air quality, and Labour's Southampton City Council are determined to get to grips with it.

What are the tools we need to do the work, and how available are they? What should government do to support Southampton? We need to know all the answers to these questions and I'm looking to the SERA A Breath of Fresh Air to provide them.

ALAN WHITEHEAD MP

MP for Southampton Test and SERA Parliamentary Link

In Brighton and Hove we have seen an encouraging improvement in air quality across the city over the last few years, but we have much more to do. Helping transport operators clean up their fleets makes a real difference. The Clean Air Act for the 21st Century must recognise the vital role sustainable transport has to play.

COUNCILLOR GILL MITCHELL

Deputy Leader of Brighton and Hove Council and Chair of the Environment, Transport, and Sustainability Committee



