



Craig Whittaker MP

CALDER VALLEY

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AIR QUALITY AND POLLUTION

Thank you for contacting me about air quality and pollution.

I am pleased that we have seen significant improvements in recent decades, with significant reductions in emissions of all the key pollutants, and UK emissions of nitrogen oxides falling by almost 20 per cent between 2010 and 2015. However, local levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) remain unacceptably high in some areas. Analysis shows 81 roads, of which 33 are outside London, are forecast to have nitrogen dioxide levels above legal limits. I am glad to say that the Government is taking sensible, proportionate action to tackle roadside nitrogen dioxide concentrations.

England's councils that are projected to have the most acute NO₂ problems have been asked to identify targeted local actions that they can take to tackle the specific problems in their areas as quickly as possible. Plans will be assessed by to make sure they are effective, fair and good value for money. If local plans do not meet that test, councils will be required to take action to achieve legal compliance.

The Government is making £255 million available to councils to accelerate air quality plans, bringing total investment in improving air quality to £3 billion. It has also announced a new Clean Air Fund that they can draw on to fund measures such as retro-fitting bus fleets or reconfiguring road layouts that reduce NO₂ emissions. I believe this local approach is preferable to the blanket imposition of charging zones on drivers.

I welcome this surgical approach of targeted interventions, and believe it will be effective at reducing roadside nitrogen dioxide emissions while ensuring motorists are not unfairly and disproportionately penalised. It is one part of a broader programme to deliver cleaner air and a healthy environment, which next year will be supplemented by a new Clean Air Strategy addressing all pollutants.

I believe that together, these plans will help us grow a stronger and cleaner economy.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

Craig Whittaker MP