

## **P-05-825 Protect children's lungs from harmful pollution whilst at school – Welsh Government's Clean Air Plan – 6 August 2020**

**“We have to take action now” – Minister launches Welsh Government's Clean Air Plan for Wales to improve air quality**

The Welsh Government has today (Thursday, August 6) outlined the measures it will take to improve the country's air quality under its Clean Air Plan for Wales: **Healthy Air, Healthy Wales.**

Poor air quality is the biggest environmental risk to public health and also has effects on biodiversity and the natural environment.

In Wales, poor air quality contributes to a reduced life expectancy equivalent to between 1,000 and 1,400 deaths each year – often having a pronounced impact on the most vulnerable, such as the very young or very old, and those with respiratory and cardiovascular conditions.

The Clean Air Plan identifies a range of actions to be delivered by the Welsh Government and our partners to improving the nation's air quality.

The measures outlined in the Plan will work alongside existing schemes to reduce public exposure to air pollution.

These actions will reduce air pollution, health risks and inequalities in order to improve public health.

They will also support our natural environment through actions supporting biodiversity and Welsh agriculture, reducing emissions from industry and creating sustainable places to live in, which will improve our quality of life.

The Plan links strategies and initiatives which encourage more people to walk, cycle, or use public transport complementing the Active Travel Act and the Welsh Government's Transforming Towns Initiative.

Some of the measures include:

- significant investment in active travel infrastructure, improving rail services and supporting decarbonisation through our aim for a zero tailpipe exhaust emission taxi and bus fleet by 2028.
- investigating measures to support a reduction in personal vehicle use such as road user charging, Clean Air Zones and/or Low Emission Zones.

- implementing our electric vehicle charging strategy and supporting an increase in the proportion of vehicles which are ultra-low emission (ULEV) and promoting a shift to ULEVs for waste collection.
- reviewing the powers local authorities have to tackle emissions from domestic burning.
- investigating the contribution bonfires and fireworks make to levels of harmful emissions
- increasing air quality monitoring through the development of a new Air Pollution Monitoring Network to protect the public, especially those most vulnerable, from air pollution.
- intelligent tree and hedge planting alongside expanding woodlands to support air quality improvements.
- strengthening the control of emissions in agriculture.
- delivering enhanced behaviour change communications and producing new statutory guidance to help protect workforces from exposure to air pollution.
- proposals for a new Clean Air Act for Wales to enhance existing legislation and introduce new powers to further tackle air pollution.

Lesley Griffiths, the Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs, launched the new plan with a visit to Castle Street in Cardiff, where Cardiff Council is taking urgent action to tackle high levels of nitrogen dioxide emissions.

Castle Street has been closed to vehicles with road space being reallocated to create a two-way cycle lane to improve the route through the city centre. Cardiff Council are working to reshape the city centre to prioritise pedestrian safety, whilst supporting cycle and bus access in both the city centre and between key local centres.

The new measures on Castle Street are one of a number of changes carried out by local authorities across Wales – supported by Welsh Government – in order to curb emissions and improve air quality locally.

The Minister said:

I am very pleased to announce the launch of our Clean Air Plan, which sets out how we will look to improve air quality across Wales, and deal with those problems caused by air pollution, during the next 10 years.

The aims outlined in the Plan are there to safeguard the most vulnerable, but improving our air quality nationwide will be to the benefit of everyone in Wales, and it's something we should all want and strive for. But in order to achieve that, we have to take action now.

Much of that work is already underway – despite the recent pandemic, we have been able to support local authorities in commencing work on schemes to improve air quality across Wales, with the changes to Castle Street being one example.

We know that as people across Wales have responded to those restrictions imposed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, they have changed how they do things and taken on new habits – including decreasing their reliance on cars, and doing more in their local areas, rather than feeling the need to travel long distances.

The Minister added:

While the work outlined in the plan will run across government, the measures involved cannot be achieved by government alone – we'll have a role to play in ensuring that we tackle the problems of air pollution and poor air quality.

While the Clean Air Plan will require us all to play our part in tackling poor air quality, the recent actions undertaken by the people of Wales show what we can do when we come together in order to protect the most vulnerable, and to respond to those problems which face all of us.

Joseph Carter, Chair of Healthy Air Cymru, said:

Having been involved in the development of this plan, we are incredibly proud of what it has become. This ambitious proposal offers the opportunity to transform our country and create a greener, healthier Wales.

However, this plan cannot be delivered overnight and will need support from everyone across Wales. Now is the time to make this issue a priority – this is about delivering for people and communities across Wales.

We all have a role to play in improving air quality across Wales, and through working together, we can build upon it and work together to deliver for future generations. Let's make 2021 the fresh start Wales needs, by passing this ambitious plan through a robust Clean Air Act.”

An earlier version of the Plan went out for public consultation in December; the revised Plan in its present form follows that consultation, which lasted for 12 weeks.

The consultation included events with stakeholders and engagement events with young people.

- [Clean Air Plan for Wales: Healthy Air, Healthy Wales](#)