

Pwyllgor Newid Hinsawdd, yr Amgylchedd a Seilwaith /
Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee
Blaenoriaethau ar gyfer y Chweched Senedd / Priorities for the Sixth Senedd
PR09

Ymateb gan Asthma UK a Sefydliad Prydeinig yr Ysgyfaint / Evidence from Asthma
UK and British Lung Foundation Wales



Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to developing the workplan of the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure committee. We were pleased to see a combined committee to cover most of the work of the Minister and Deputy Ministers for Climate Change and hope that this Senedd will be able to pass the legislation needed to reduce air pollution and tackle climate change.

About Asthma UK and British Lung Foundation

Building on existing collaboration, in January 2020 Asthma UK and the British Lung Foundation merged to become the Asthma UK and British Lung Foundation.

At some point in our lives, one in five of us will have a lung disease. Across the UK, millions more are at risk. We are the only UK charity looking after the lungs of Wales.

As we've seen with the COVID-19 crisis, acute respiratory symptoms can bring countries to a standstill and cause thousands of deaths. The recent pandemic has highlighted the need for clear and robust guidelines and support for people with a lung condition, but has also shone a spotlight on the patchy provision of support and treatment for everyone who has a respiratory disease. We want to see proactive and holistic approaches to help prevent, diagnose and treat lung conditions so that we can all live better, healthier lives.

- Through research, we can find new ways to prevent, manage (and self-manage), treat and eventually cure lung diseases.

The Asthma UK and British Lung Foundation Partnership is a company limited by guarantee 01863614 (England and Wales).
VAT number 648 8121 18. Registered charity in England and Wales (326730), Scotland (SC038415) and the Isle of Man (1177).
Registered office: 18 Mansell Street, London, E1 8AA.

Mae Asthma UK a British Lung Foundation Partnership yn gwmni cyfyngedig trwy warant 01863614 (Cymru a Lloegr). Rhif TAW 648 8121 18.

Elusen gofrestredig yng Nghymru a Lloegr (326730), yr Alban (SC038415) ac Ynys Manaw (1177). Swyddfa gofrestredig: 18 Mansell Street, Llundain, E1 8AA.



- With support, we provide for people who struggle to breathe the skills, knowledge and confidence to take control of their lives.
- Together, we're campaigning for clean air, better services and investment in research and innovation.

One day, everyone will breathe clean air with healthy lungs.

Creating a Healthier Wales

Air pollution contributes to almost 1,400 early deaths and costs the Welsh NHS almost £1billion every year. Families across Wales see the impact of air pollution on their daily lives. We are seeing more and more children developing asthma, their lungs are not developing as they should be, and people's existing health conditions are getting worse.

For vulnerable people, even a short-term spike in air pollution can affect their health, leaving many people needing emergency hospital treatment. Long term exposure also increases your risk of developing conditions such as heart disease, dementia, lung cancer, diabetes and more. People's mental health suffers too, with research showing that poor air quality is linked to higher levels of depression, bipolar disorder, and schizophrenia.

Improving public health must be at the forefront of our fight to reduce air pollution and create a healthier, sustainable future for everyone.

A Cleaner and Greener Future

Climate change is the single biggest issue our generation faces. The decisions we make now will have long-lasting effects on our planet and our health – so it's vital that we all prioritise a green and fair recovery. Cleaner air will ensure improved health and wellbeing for current and future generations. Our environment gives us the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the food we eat. We are committed to tackling air pollution so we can safeguard these vital resources and protect people's health.

Supporting Active Travel

Never before has it been so clear that the way we travel directly impacts the lives of those around us. The increase in walking and cycling during lockdown has shown that when roads are safe and quiet, people are more likely to leave their cars at home. For the sake of our health and our planet, we cannot let the car continue to dominate our roads. As we look to the future, our towns and cities need to become cleaner, greener and more sustainable places to live.



Creating Fairer Communities

Everyone has the right to breathe clean and healthy air. We are all affected by air pollution, but some individuals and communities are more affected than others. Targeted action is needed to address these inequalities, protect people's health and enable people and businesses to reduce their contribution to the problem. Together, we can make the changes necessary to build a fairer future for all.

We are calling on Welsh Government to do:

- 1. Introduce a new Clean Air Act for Wales, which commits to tackling air pollution as a public health imperative.** A new Act that will protect our 'right to breathe' by enshrining World Health Organization (WHO) air quality guidelines with the mandatory requirement to produce a statutory air quality strategy every five years, which will be assessed against legal air quality guidelines by an independent monitoring and assessment board.
- 2. With the support of a Clean Air Fund, we are calling for a statutory duty on local authorities to increase monitoring, assessment and action to improve air quality.** Such monitoring will help to build an effective national clean air plan, which will be reviewed every five years and take effective means to reduce pollution levels to improve public health and meet legal national air quality targets.
- 3. Focusing on future generations, we are calling for every school in Wales to receive funding and support to introduce School Streets and create a welcoming and safe environment for children to walk and cycle to school.** We need every Local Authority to be encouraging positive behaviours in our schools by promoting active travel and protecting the healthy development of our future generations from harmful toxins.
- 4. To enable more people to walk, run and cycle, we are calling to enrich communities with attractive, healthy and green infrastructure with community spaces and green routes that improve our wellbeing and local ecosystems.** Everyone should have easy, five-minute access to a green space at home, at work and in the places where our children learn and grow. We need informed changes that will not only look after our lungs but the lungs of the planet too.
- 5. To discourage the use of the most polluting vehicles on our roads, we call for targeted support to trade in diesel and petrol vehicles for their alternative electric/hybrid versions and encourage a modal shift from car/van use to bicycles, e-bikes, e-cargo bikes and e-car sharing clubs.** We need a charging network that doesn't clutter active travel routes, support for demand-responsive community transport, electric car and bike-sharing



schemes and active travel-friendly neighbourhoods which repurpose car parks as community spaces and discourage vehicle traffic.

How can the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee help?

We would like to committee to undertake a short inquiry into Welsh Government's Clean Air Plan and the proposed Clean Air Bill.

How would an inquiry help?

The previous government committed to delivering a Clean Air Act before the 2021 Welsh General Election, but then it was sadly postponed due to COVID-19. A draft Clean Air Plan was published in December 2019, widely consulted on and then published as a finalised plan in August 2020. Asthma UK and British Lung Foundation Wales, together with other charities within Healthy Air Cymru supported the plan, but it needed legislation to underpin much of it.

During the election all four parties committed to delivering a Clean Air Bill.

Welsh Labour promised:

'We will ... Set the highest international standards of air quality into law in a Clean Air Act for Wales, consistent with World Health Organisation guidance. We will extend the provision of air quality monitoring to encourage positive behaviour to reduce exposure and eliminate pollution at source.'

Welsh Conservatives promised:

'We will ... introduce a Clean Air Act to tackle pollution and reduce the incidence of respiratory diseases.'

Plaid Cymru promised:

'We will introduce a Clean Air Act to establish clean air zones in towns and cities. This will: • Create Clean Air Zones in pollution hotspots, with targeted action on transport, industry, and domestic solid fuel and wood burning, with Cardiff, Swansea, Wrexham and Newport covered as a matter of urgency.

- Give communities the right to place pollution-monitoring equipment outside schools and hospitals.*
- Enable local authorities to introduce pollution charges.'*

Welsh Liberal Democrats promised:

'We will pass a Clean Air Act in the first 100 days to tackle dirty air and the poor health outcomes it causes.'

On 12 May 2021 when the First Minister was re-elected by Members of the Senedd he cited Clean Air as an area where he hoped to work with other parties and that this would be a priority for his government. We had expected the Clean Air Bill to be a priority Year 1 piece of legislation especially as a White Paper was published before the election, yet when the Counsel General announced the legislative programme it was not included.

With so much cross-party support for a Clean Air Bill, we believe that it would be useful to hold a short inquiry and take evidence from the Minister or Deputy Minister, civil servants and Healthy Air Cymru. It would be useful to understand what the delays and whether this is still a governmental priority. The inquiry could explore the impact of the Internal Market Act 2021 on future clean air legislation and whether this might limit the measures that Welsh Government can take.

Concluding Remarks

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide written evidence to the committee. We will be happy to provide the committee any future comments or oral evidence during the inquiry.

Yours sincerely,



**Joseph Carter Head of Devolved Nations
Asthma UK & British Lung Foundation Wales.**