

# 'Target congestion to improve air quality'

Lobby group claims improving traffic flow would cut pollution

## AIR QUALITY

► Cross-industry lobby group Greener Journeys has warned that the government's plans to improve air quality will fail because they are ignoring the growing impact of congestion on pollution in city centres.

New analysis by Greener Journeys and Professor David Begg, the former chairman of the government's Commission for Integrated Transport, has revealed the direct impact of rising congestion on tailpipe emissions. It has seen a halving of average city traffic speeds leading to a 50% increase in emissions from larger vehicles as they crawl along busy urban roads. In nose-to-tail traffic, tailpipe emissions are four times greater than they are in free flow traffic.

In contrast, Begg and Greener Journeys claim that easing traffic flow can lead to dramatic reductions in NOx emissions from all vehicle types. Emissions from the latest diesel buses conforming to Euro 6 emissions standards, for example, can be halved by increasing speeds from just 3.7mph to 5mph.

They add that diesel cars are the single biggest contributor to NOx emissions on the road, accounting for 41% of all emissions from road transport. A journey by a modern Euro 6 diesel car emits 10 times more NOx per passenger than a comparable journey by a Euro 6 bus.

The analysis has been published by Greener Journeys to coincide



with National Clean Air Day as part of its submission to the government's consultation on its draft air quality plan. It says that the government will find it impossible to keep air pollution in check unless it takes meaningful steps to improve falling urban traffic speeds.

Congestion in the UK's largest cities is 14% worse than five years ago and traffic speeds are forecast

to fall by almost 5mph from 17mph to an average of 12mph by 2030, and to significantly slower speeds in peak hours.

However, traffic delays are set to almost double over the next decade, leading to an average delay of a minute and a half per mile on England's main A roads. As Begg noted: "The congestion problem is not going to go away on its own."

## 'Clean Air Zones need a local focus'

UTG says government proposals could hinder local plans

► The Urban Transport Group has warned that proposals for the introduction of Clean Air Zones appear to leave the government with considerable leeway to micro-manage local Clean Air Zones via "ambiguous tests".

As part of its submission to the government's consultation on its draft air quality plan, UTG

says that the proposals are "out of line with government's wider stated commitment to devolution on the basis that local areas are best placed to determine the most appropriate response".

The government has suggested that any local Clean Air Zone must ensure that there are "no unintended consequences". "The ambiguity and scope

Greener Journeys chief executive Claire Haigh said that it's time for the government to take meaningful action to tackle the air quality issue.

"Handing responsibility for all the tough decisions to local authorities will not be sufficient. Government must show leadership," she said.

"Some measures in the Air Quality Plan, such as the government's commitment to retrofit technology are promising. However, its failure to take tougher action on diesel cars and establish further mandatory Clean Air Zones exposes a lack of commitment.

"Congestion has a direct and severe impact on air pollution. The government's plans must tackle congestion and encourage greater use of sustainable transport modes." ■

**"Congestion has a direct and severe impact on air pollution"**

Claire Haigh

for government micro-management could also hinder the development of effective air quality management strategies as local areas will need to second guess what the government would find acceptable," claims UTG. "Given the tight timescales for achieving air quality targets this could lead to valuable time being wasted and in air quality plans that are ineffective."

It concludes that local authorities are best placed to determine local needs. ■