



Brexit: What does it mean for air quality?

Air quality stats in brief:

- > The UK is at significant risk from poor air quality. **London exceeded the total annual limit for air pollution just five days into 2017**, according to data from the capital's main monitoring system.
- > Outdoor air pollution causes an estimated **40,000 deaths** in the UK every year.¹
- > Exposure to outdoor air pollution is estimated to lead to **a loss of 15 minutes of life expectancy** each day.²
- > In addition to the health implications, air pollution has a significant impact on business and our health services. In the UK, these costs add up to more than **£20 billion** every year.
- > Exposure to outdoor air pollution is associated with **lifelong health implications**, including: effects on foetal development (particularly in relation to lung and kidney development), and increases in heart attacks and strokes for those in later life. Air pollution is also linked to asthma, diabetes, dementia, obesity and cancer.

The RCP's recommendations

Brexit must not be used as an opportunity to weaken laws and regulations relating to air pollution. We believe the government should:

- > consolidate the complex and disparate body of domestic, EU and international air pollution laws into one coherent and effective piece of legislation
- > retain the objectives under the EU Ambient Air Quality Directive
- > adopt revised objectives based on WHO guidelines
- > implement the UK's pollution reduction targets for 2020 and 2030 under the Gothenburg Protocol and the newly agreed EU National Emissions Ceiling Directive, in order to tackle trans-boundary sources of air pollution
- > continue to work with EU institutions in responding to the challenge of tackling air pollution. Without such cooperation, the UK may be unable to meet the WHO's air pollution standards through local action alone.

The EU and air pollution

Air pollution is an international problem, as no individual nation is in complete control of their air quality. For example, 48% of the equivalent deaths in London associated with air pollution are caused by sources outside the city, including sources from Europe.³

The EU has played a significant role in implementing safeguards that control levels of harmful air pollutants.⁴ For example, when fully implemented; the new National Emissions Ceilings Directive will reduce the negative health impacts of air pollution, such as respiratory diseases and premature death, by almost 50% by 2030.

References

www.rcplondon.ac.uk/brexit-air-quality



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References

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- 4 European Commission. *Air Quality – Existing Legislation*. www.ec.europa.eu/environment/air/quality/legislation/existing_leg.htm

