

Press release – under embargo until 00:01am 18th June 2020

Founders set challenge to keep air pollution levels down for Clean Air Day

Global Action Plan, the charity behind Clean Air Day (the UK's largest air quality campaign), has issued a challenge to keep air pollution levels down, and the roads clear, on what would have been Clean Air Day 2020. The challenge has been set following analysis of air pollution data. The data reveals that nitrogen dioxide levels for the week leading up to what would have been Clean Air Day 2020 are 18% lower than the week leading up to and including Clean Air Day 2019.

The annual event was set for 18 June 2020 and has been postponed until 8 October 2020, due to the coronavirus crisis.

Lockdown restrictions imposed by the UK Government mean that many people have been able to experience what life can be like with less traffic and lower pollution. Two thirds of people reported benefits of lockdown, including noticing reduced air pollution. For the week that would have been Clean Air Day 2020 (10 – 16 June) the average NO₂ levels were 18% lower than the week leading up to and including Clean Air Day 2019.

To make 8 October 2020 the cleanest Clean Air Day yet, the charity is challenging companies, local authorities and individuals to play their part in keeping air pollution levels low - by keeping cars off the road where possible over the summer months.

- **Local authorities** are encouraged to trial "School Streets" and make use of national government funding to improve safety for cyclists and pedestrians.
- **Businesses** are encouraged to continue supporting remote working for employees who are able to as lockdown eases.
- **Individuals** are encouraged to ask decision makers and businesses to take steps to keep air pollution levels low, and to continue to enjoy the benefits of walking and cycling shorter distances, as well as leaving the car at home whenever possible.

Clean Air Day campaign support, information and updated resources are available at www.cleanairday.org.uk.

Larissa Lockwood, Head of Air Quality, Global Action Plan: *"During this coronavirus crisis, we have seen that breathing polluted air need not be a fact of life, and many have enjoyed the benefits of lower traffic neighbourhoods. Air pollution over the previous days has been significantly lower than it was this time last year. We now have an unprecedented opportunity to make clean air part of the new normal, and today we put the challenge out there for all of us to play our part to maintain these lower levels of air pollution, make Clean Air Day 2020 the cleanest Clean Air Day yet and enable us all to breathe healthier air."*

ENDS

Notes to Editors

Clean Air Day

Clean Air Day is the UK's largest national air quality campaign, co-ordinated by Global Action Plan and executed by over 250 Supporter organisations and thousands of participating organisations. www.cleanairday.org.uk

In 2019 Clean Air Day 400,000 people experience cleaner air, through 614 events. More information on the success of last year can be found in the [Clean Air Day Celebration and Insights Report](#).

School Streets

"School Streets" is a scheme to transform roads outside schools so that only pedestrians and cyclists can use them during pick up and drop off times.

Data calculations

We looked at all Defra monitoring stations across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland for the week prior to and including Clean Air Day 2019, using the daily average mean NO₂ value, and averaging this across the week. This exercise was repeated for the week up to and including 16 June 2020. Comparing the nationwide averages shows that the week commencing 16 June 2020 had on average 18% lower NO₂ values than the 7 days from 14 June 2019. Air pollution information gathered from the Defra UK Air Data Selector service: https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/data/data_selector_service

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