

To: Heidi Alexander, Secretary of State for Transport

In CC:

The Rt Hon Dame Angela Eagle, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

The Rt Hon Yvette Cooper, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care

Department for Transport
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

Sent by email, 21 October 2026

Dear Secretary of State for Transport

Re: The zero emission vehicle mandate and public health

As members of the Healthy Air Coalition, we are writing to underscore the crucial importance of the zero emission vehicle (ZEV) mandate to driving improvements in air quality across the nation.

Whilst the mandate is aimed at reducing carbon emissions, it is also one of the most significant current policies we have to reduce air pollution. Petrol and diesel-powered vehicles remain the largest single source of harmful nitrogen oxides in our towns and cities, and one of the largest sources of fine particulate matter. The ZEV mandate is the only UK-wide transport policy in place that will structurally replace polluting combustion engine vehicles with zero-emission alternatives at scale.

Weakening the mandate would severely harm both air quality and public health, placing additional financial and operational pressure on the NHS and social care system. It is also contrary to the Government's promises to tackle health inequalities and give every child the best start in life.

The Royal College of Physicians' 2025 landmark report, [A Breath of Fresh Air](#), found that air pollution is responsible for the equivalent of 30,000 deaths in the UK each year, costing over £27 billion annually in core healthcare expenses, productivity losses, and reduced quality of life. This cost could rise to £50 billion when accounting for broader conditions such as dementia. Furthermore, mounting evidence shows the alarming health impacts of long-term exposure to air pollution in children: developmental issues, stunted lung growth, and even pollution particles in the lungs and brains of fetuses.

We were pleased to see clean air recognised as a priority in the 10 Year Health Plan for England, and agree that reducing air pollution will require a joined-up, concerted approach across government departments. This includes the Department for Transport. Weakening the mandate would result in hundreds of thousands of additional polluting cars on our streets for years to come. Doing so is not compatible with achieving the goals the Government has set for the nation's health.

We urge you to resist calls to weaken the mandate's targets, and ensure that sustainable transport policy plays its full part in cleaning the UK's air and protecting public health.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Camilla Kingdon, Chair, Healthy Air Coalition; NHS Consultant Paediatrician

Dr Rosamund Adoo-Kissi-Debrah CBE, Founder and Director, Ella Roberta Foundation

Simon Birkett, Founder and Director, Clean Air in London

Roz Bulleid, Research and Policy Director, Green Alliance

Mike Childs, Head of Science, Policy and Research, Friends of the Earth

Philip Glanville, Director of Advocacy, UK100

Sonja Graham, Chief Executive Officer, Global Action Plan

Areeba Hamid, Co-Executive Director, Greenpeace UK

Jemima Hartshorn, Founder and Director, Mums for Lungs

Professor Stephen Holgate, Special Adviser on Air Quality, Royal College of Physicians

Joseph Lewis, Head of Policy, Institution of Environmental Sciences

Mohamed Osman, Executive Director, Impact on Urban Health

Shirish Sinha, Executive Director - Programmes, Clean Air Fund

Sarah Sleet, Chief Executive Officer, Asthma + Lung UK

Professor Steve Turner, President, Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health