# Dundee's LEZ shows early air quality gains amid sharp public division and scrutiny over fines



Dundee's low emission zone (LEZ) has sparked significant debate within the community, with recent reactions from residents highlighting a sharp division in opinion regarding the scheme's effectiveness. Data from the first year of LEZ enforcement indicates a promising reduction in nitrogen dioxide concentrations, with measurements at the Seagate station averaging 25.24 µg/m³, down from 28.87 µg/m³ prior to the policy's implementation. Meanwhile, readings from Whitehall, also within the LEZ, revealed only a marginal decline. Professor Jill Belch, a researcher focused on air pollution's health impact, described the reduction as “extremely encouraging.”

Yet, the area sees a spectrum of public sentiment. Some commenters, like Chris Gibson, argue that the transition to electric buses has rendered the LEZ unnecessary, suggesting that such measures may not be impactful enough to justify their existence. Another commentator, known as Dundee Born and Bred, asserted that the LEZ should be abolished altogether. This scepticism is compounded by claims from others who view the initiative as little more than a "cash grab." For instance, Charles Allison noted the financial rewards for the council, reporting that over £880,000 in fines was issued within the first six months of the LEZ's enforcement, a figure that raises questions about the balance between revenue generation and public health goals.

Supporting opinions have emerged, however, advocating for broader measures to combat air pollution. Gregor McIntosh suggested that while the LEZ is indeed showing positive signs, there is a pressing need for increased bus services to diminish car dependency and further enhance air quality improvements. This discussion coincides with a wider examination of air quality targets, especially following Professor Belch’s concerns that current pollution levels remain unsafe. A community member issued a poignant reminder about the individual variability in health responses to pollutants, reinforcing the idea that policies must consider the diverse impacts on different populations.

The topic has also surfaced complex discussions regarding air quality standards. Dundee's current air quality adheres to Scotland's objective of maintaining averages below 40 µg/m³ of nitrogen dioxide. However, the World Health Organization (WHO) has revised its guidelines, recommending a significantly lower annual average of 10 µg/m³. This shift has led to community pushback, with sceptics questioning the basis for such changes and the fairness of penalising vulnerable populations who rely on car transport. One contributor noted the inconsistency inherent in declaring a baseline "safe" only to impose stricter limits thereafter, while another responded by clarifying that the WHO does not possess the authority to mandate laws but instead advises governments based on extensive research.

This debate reflects a growing international scrutiny surrounding air quality regulations. The EU is poised to strengthen its air quality standards by aligning closer with WHO guidelines, notably reducing nitrogen dioxide limits, by 2024. However, widespread compliance remains an elusive goal, as suggested by a study revealing that no country met WHO air quality recommendations in 2021. As Dundee's local authorities navigate these complexities, the future of the LEZ and its ramifications for public health and traffic policies remain hotly contested issues.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/business-environment/environment/5258408/dundee-lez-readers-react-air-quality/), [[4]](https://www.who.int/europe/news-room/22-09-2021-new-who-global-air-quality-guidelines-aim-to-save-millions-of-lives-from-air-pollution)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/business-environment/environment/5258408/dundee-lez-readers-react-air-quality/), [[2]](https://www.who.int/news/item/22-09-2021-new-who-global-air-quality-guidelines-aim-to-save-millions-of-lives-from-air-pollution), [[5]](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK574591/table/ch3.tab26/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.reuters.com/business/environment/eu-strikes-deal-strengthen-air-quality-standards-2024-02-21/), [[6]](https://www.cnn.com/2021/09/22/world/air-pollution-climate-change-health/index.html/)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/business-environment/environment/5258408/dundee-lez-readers-react-air-quality/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.who.int/news/item/22-09-2021-new-who-global-air-quality-guidelines-aim-to-save-millions-of-lives-from-air-pollution> - In September 2021, the World Health Organization (WHO) updated its Global Air Quality Guidelines, lowering recommended maximum levels for six major pollutants, including nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), to protect public health. The new guidelines aim to reduce deaths from pollution-related cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, which are responsible for approximately 7 million deaths annually. The revised guidelines emphasize that clean air is a fundamental human right crucial for healthy societies. This update coincides with global discussions on emissions and climate change, including the upcoming UN climate talks in Glasgow, which seek to secure commitments to address climate change despite concerns about achieving actionable plans.
3. <https://www.reuters.com/business/environment/eu-strikes-deal-strengthen-air-quality-standards-2024-02-21/> - In February 2024, the European Parliament and EU member states reached an agreement to strengthen air quality standards across the 27-nation European Union. The new rules set air quality standards for 2030 in the form of pollutant limits and target values that are closer to the guidelines of the World Health Organization (WHO). The agreement aims to reduce pollution caused by fine particulate matter (PM₂.₅) and nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), which have been linked to thousands of deaths annually. The new rules will lower the annual limits for PM₂.₅ from 25 µg/m³ to 10 µg ... NO₂ from 40 µg/m ... . Member states can request a deadline extension under strict conditions by January 31, 2029. This agreement requires formal confirmation by the European Parliament and Council before adoption.
4. <https://www.who.int/europe/news-room/22-09-2021-new-who-global-air-quality-guidelines-aim-to-save-millions-of-lives-from-air-pollution> - In September 2021, the World Health Organization (WHO) updated its Global Air Quality Guidelines, lowering recommended maximum levels for six major pollutants, including nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), to protect public health. The new guidelines aim to reduce deaths from pollution-related cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, which are responsible for approximately 7 million deaths annually. The revised guidelines emphasize that clean air is a fundamental human right crucial for healthy societies. This update coincides with global discussions on emissions and climate change, including the upcoming UN climate talks in Glasgow, which seek to secure commitments to address climate change despite concerns about achieving actionable plans.
5. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK574591/table/ch3.tab26/> - The National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI) provides a table comparing the 2021 WHO Global Air Quality Guidelines with the 2005 guidelines. The table outlines recommended levels for various pollutants, including particulate matter (PM₂.₅ and PM₁₀), ozone (O₃), nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), sulfur dioxide (SO₂), and carbon monoxide (CO). For instance, the 2021 guidelines recommend an annual mean concentration of PM₂.₅ not exceeding 5 µg/m³, compared to the 2005 guideline of 10 µg/m³. Similarly, the annual mean for NO₂ is recommended to be 10 µg/m³, down from 40 µg/m ... in 2005.
6. <https://www.cnn.com/2021/09/22/world/air-pollution-climate-change-health/index.html/> - In September 2021, the World Health Organization (WHO) updated its Global Air Quality Guidelines, lowering recommended maximum levels for six major pollutants, including nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), to protect public health. The new guidelines aim to reduce deaths from pollution-related cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, which are responsible for approximately 7 million deaths annually. The revised guidelines emphasize that clean air is a fundamental human right crucial for healthy societies. This update coincides with global discussions on emissions and climate change, including the upcoming UN climate talks in Glasgow, which seek to secure commitments to address climate change despite concerns about achieving actionable plans.
7. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jamiehailstone/2022/03/22/no-country-met-who-air-quality-guidelines-in-2021-study-finds/> - A study published in March 2022 found that no country met the World Health Organization's (WHO) air quality guidelines in 2021. The study analyzed PM₂.₅ air pollution measurements from air monitoring stations in 6,475 cities across 118 countries, regions, and territories. The WHO guidelines, updated in September 2021, set the annual mean concentration of PM₂.₅ at 5 µg/m³, down from 10 µg/m³ in the 2005 guidelines. The study highlights the global challenge in achieving these stricter air quality standards and underscores the need for continued efforts to reduce air pollution worldwide.