# Siân Berry backs urgent government action as Brighton escalates fight against air pollution



Siân Berry, the Green MP for Brighton Pavilion, has reaffirmed her commitment to addressing air pollution, highlighting the urgent need for government intervention. Her comments come in response to an open letter by the activist group Enact Equality, which has called on Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer to confront what they describe as an alarming public health and social justice crisis. The coalition of campaigners emphasises that the ramifications of air pollution disproportionately affect marginalised groups and low-income families who bear the brunt of unhealthy air, despite having contributed least to its cause.

In the letter, Enact Equality argued that air pollution transcends environmental concerns, framing it as a racial and social justice issue that demands immediate and coordinated action. This call to action is underscored by research from York University, which reveals that deprived communities in England are significantly more likely to reside in areas with elevated pollution levels. Berry echoed this sentiment, stating, “Air pollution is a social justice issue. It hits hardest in communities who have done the least to cause it," affirming the need for comprehensive government commitments to cleaner transportation and enhanced green spaces.

The demands of Enact Equality include increased investment in green transport initiatives, the creation of more accessible green spaces, and the establishment of stringent laws alongside clearer targets for air quality improvement. L’myah Sherae, the chief executive of Enact Equality, has expressed a strong desire for a dialogue with the Prime Minister, asserting that the most vulnerable communities are "paying the highest price for toxic air – with their health, their futures and their lives."

In parallel to these calls for action at the national level, local efforts in Brighton are making strides towards addressing air quality. The Brighton & Hove City Council has recently initiated a series of measures to monitor and mitigate air pollution effectively. In June 2024, the council announced the installation of new air quality monitors throughout the city to gather critical data that will inform policy decisions aimed at reducing pollution from petrol and diesel vehicles—key contributors to local air quality issues.

The council's commitment also encompasses collaborative projects, such as the introduction of electric refuse trucks and partnerships aimed at curtailing emissions from nearby Shoreham Port. These initiatives, including active participation in national campaigns to raise awareness about the implications of domestic wood burning, underscore a community-centric approach to tackling air pollution. Moreover, the rollout of a new website allows residents to access real-time data on air pollution levels, further empowering them to make informed decisions regarding their health.

Brighton’s broader Air Quality Action Plan, proposed in November 2022, lays out ambitious targets for improvement, including actions to promote active travel and the uptake of zero-emission vehicles. The plan stresses the importance of public awareness and seeks to ameliorate pollution from residential buildings by considering a citywide smoke control area, a vital step in the fight against airborne toxins.

Despite these local efforts, there remains a pressing need for stronger legislative frameworks at the national level, as highlighted by grassroots campaigners, including Clean Air for Brighton and Hove. In October 2024, this group staged a protest by displaying fake pollution signs throughout the city to underscore the need for greater public education on air quality risks. Their demands include the establishment of a Clean Air Zone, aimed at limiting the proliferation of older, more polluting diesel vehicles.

The government has publicly acknowledged the significance of the air pollution crisis. A spokesperson stated that, “Air pollution is a public health issue and we are committed to tackling this issue across the country.” They noted that £575 million has been allocated to assist local authorities in improving air quality, and a rapid review of plans to meet legally binding targets on air quality is currently underway.

As Brighton navigates these multifaceted challenges, the convergence of local initiatives and national advocacy reflects an urgent appeal for a comprehensive and united approach to safeguarding public health and enhancing the quality of life for all residents, particularly the most vulnerable among them. The call for systemic change resonates not only within the corridors of government but also throughout communities determined to reclaim their air and health.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4
2. Paragraph 5
3. Paragraph 6
4. Paragraph 7
5. Paragraph 8
6. Paragraph 9
7. Paragraph 10

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.brightonandhovenews.org/2025/05/20/brighton-mp-backs-call-for-action-to-tackle-air-pollution/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/news/2024/clearing-air-healthier-cleaner-city> - In June 2024, Brighton & Hove City Council announced the installation of new air quality monitors across the city to provide more data for targeted air quality improvements. The initiative aims to address pollution from petrol and diesel vehicles, which are major sources of air pollution in the area. The council plans to use the collected data to inform evidence-based policies to reduce pollution and protect residents' health, particularly those more vulnerable to the effects of poor air quality.
3. <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/news/2024/working-together-clean-air> - In January 2024, Brighton & Hove City Council expanded its efforts to improve air quality by introducing more electric refuse trucks and collaborating with partners to reduce emissions from transport and shipping around Shoreham Port. The council also participated in national campaigns like Clean Air Night to raise awareness about the health, financial, and climate implications of domestic wood burning, which contributes to winter smoke pollution. These local actions complement broader initiatives to tackle air pollution.
4. <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/news/2022/ambitious-targets-city-air-quality-action-plan> - In November 2022, Brighton & Hove City Council proposed an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) with ambitious targets to improve air quality in the city. The plan includes over 60 proposed actions under five priority headings: increasing active travel, supporting the uptake of ultra-low and zero exhaust vehicles, improving monitoring and public awareness, reducing emissions from buildings and new development, and fostering partnership working. A key action is to consider a citywide smoke control area by 2023 to reduce smoke from chimneys.
5. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c1m9v5j787go> - In October 2024, a new website was launched by Brighton and Hove City Council, allowing residents in parts of Sussex to check real-time air pollution levels in their area. The data comes from a network of sensors installed over the previous year in and around Brighton, the South Downs National Park, the A27 and A23, Shoreham-by-Sea, Newhaven, and Horsham. The initiative aims to raise awareness about the impact of vehicle and gas boiler emissions, as well as smoke from log burners and fireplaces, on air quality.
6. <https://cleantechnica.com/2023/12/28/brighton-hove-city-council-in-the-uk-steps-up-measures-to-improve-air-quality/> - In December 2023, Brighton & Hove City Council intensified its efforts to improve air quality by issuing Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) to drivers for engine idling, aiming to deter unnecessary emissions. Additionally, the council applied for funding under the UK government's ZEBRA 2 fund to introduce 16 electric buses and associated charging infrastructure, supporting the transition to a zero-emission fleet. These measures are part of the council's broader strategy to reduce emissions and enhance air quality in the city.
7. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-sussex-66492748> - In October 2024, the campaign group Clean Air for Brighton and Hove displayed fake pollution signs across the city to raise awareness about the dangers of air pollution. The group expressed concerns that elected representatives were not taking sufficient action to improve air quality or educate the public on the risks associated with pollution. They advocated for the implementation of a Clean Air Zone (CAZ) to reduce the number of older diesel vehicles, which are significant contributors to air pollution in the area.