

# Friends of the Earth protest about air pollution in Edinburgh



Friends of the Earth tell us that Edinburgh Council has announced plans to formally extended its city centre Air Pollution Zone by another 3.5 km to the South and West of the city. They also say that this designates an area where air pollution regularly breaks Scottish Air Quality Safety Standards.

Campaigners marked the new area with a photo stunt this morning showing people on their morning commute wearing gas masks and struggling to breathe against a backdrop of a gigantic gas mask banner on Nicolson Street which is in the heart of the newly extended Pollution Zone.

Friends of the Earth Scotland air pollution campaigner Emilia Hanna said,

“Toxic traffic fumes right here on Nicolson Street are harming the public’s health. Long-term exposure to this sort of air pollution can increase the risk of having a heart attack or stroke and has been linked with babies being born with low birthweights. Air pollution causes 200 early deaths in Edinburgh alone every year. [3]

“Nicolson Street is heaving with festival goers as well as commuters at this time of year and it is a scandal that everyone is forced to breathe in illegal air pollution. Nicolson Street needs to be transformed from a toxic thoroughfare into a sustainable transport avenue. Priority

should be given to walkers, cyclists and public transport users, and car use should be restricted. The bus lanes on Nicolson Street should be upgraded to be in operation all day rather than just at peak hours. This would create a cleaner, safer, and more attractive environment where everyone could breathe clean air.”



FoE say that Edinburgh has five pollution zones and the city centre pollution zone was first declared in 2000. In addition they say that Edinburgh City Council has so far failed to eradicate illegal levels of air pollution. The Scottish Government also apparently missed a European legal deadline to achieve clean air in Edinburgh by January 2015. Along with the UK Government it has been forced by the Supreme Court to produce a new Air Quality Plan before the end of the year. It is currently drawing up a Low Emission Strategy to tackle the country's air pollution.

Ms Hanna continued: “Road traffic is the main cause of air pollution, so the Council needs to work together with the Scottish Government to get more people walking and cycling and using public transport. It also needs to introduce a Low Emission Zone across the city, where vehicles entering the most polluted areas need to have meet clean emissions standards or pay a fine.”