

Friends of the Earth criticise low emission zone plans

Environmental campaigners Friends of the Earth have criticised the council's plans for a new Low Emission Zone. The group highlight that a Low Emission Zone which covers the whole city fails to address pollution from cars, and cautioned that the inner small zone would serve only to displace air pollution.

The plans have been revealed in papers published today ahead of the Transport and Environment meeting next week.

[The council report](#) recommends a two-tier Low Emission Zone to improve air quality in the capital.

- * A small low emission zone covering the Old Town will restrict buses and HGVs from the end of 2021, with the oldest, most-polluting cars only facing restrictions from the end of 2024.
- * A larger zone, covering the whole city, will be in place from the end of 2023 and does not apply to cars. It will only apply to buses, coaches, and HGVs.
- * There will be no restrictions on cars in Edinburgh in the next 5 years, despite their huge role in causing air pollution.
- * Edinburgh currently has 6 official pollution zones, where air quality standards are not met.

Friends of the Earth Scotland's Air Pollution Campaigner, Gavin Thomson said: "These plans from City of Edinburgh Council could have been a great step forward for air quality in the city, and the case for these improvements is clear. Toxic and illegal levels of air pollution in Edinburgh cause 200 early deaths each year. Several streets across the city are breaking legal limits that should have been met years ago.

“It is shocking that no restrictions will be applied to cars in the next 5 years, no matter how polluting these vehicles may be. Many residents in Edinburgh will be surprised that the Council is creating a zone to tackle air pollution but that it doesn’t actually apply to cars.

“These two-tier plans mean tourists and shoppers will be breathing clean air in the city centre but, further out, residential areas will experience higher traffic and air pollution, as vehicles drive round the zone. These half-hearted plans fail to tackle persistent pollution hotspots in the city.

“Everyone in Edinburgh has a right to breathe safe air now, yet these plans will only begin to clear the air in one part of the city. Why are some people in Edinburgh more worthy of protection from air pollution than others?

“An effective Low Emission Zone needs to cover a large area and restrict the most polluting vehicles, including cars. The long lead-in time for these plans means young children in Edinburgh will continue to grow up choking on dirty air that is harming their health and development.

“The Council has brought forward really good transport plans in recent months and is investing in walking and cycling but their choice to delay serious action on polluting vehicles fails to protect the health of our most vulnerable citizens.

“As part of our response to the climate emergency, we must take action to reduce the climate emissions from cars. By failing to apply restrictions on car use for the next 5 years, these plans miss a great opportunity to help Edinburgh play its part in tackling climate change.

“Edinburgh’s plans will improve air quality in the capital in the long-term, but we need more ambition now if we want to protect health and move the whole city forward.”



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