

# **TramForward**

## *Campaigning for Light Rail*

PRESS RELEASE FROM *TramForward*

28 February 2014

### **TramForward calls on government to prioritise electric public transport to combat deadly air pollution**

On February 20 the European Commission announced that it was pursuing legal action against the UK government for breaching limits for nitrogen dioxide in 16 of 43 zones in the country, and for failing to reduce concentrations by the 2010 deadline. The UK now faces fines of up to £300m a year and embarrassing court appearances. The areas concerned are Greater London, the West Midlands, Greater Manchester, West Yorkshire, Teesside, the Potteries, Hull, Southampton, Glasgow, the east, the south-east, the east Midlands, Merseyside, Yorkshire & Humberside and the north-east, with London having the highest levels of nitrogen dioxide of any European capital city.

The Commission said that: "Nitrogen dioxide is the main precursor for ground-level ozone causing major respiratory problems and leading to premature death. City-dwellers are particularly exposed, as most nitrogen dioxide originates in traffic fumes

Air pollution causes 29,000 premature deaths a year in the UK and the World Health Organisation has confirmed that air pollution causes cancer. Children and older people are particularly at risk from on-street pollution, which also causes heart attacks and respiratory problems.

According to EU environment commissioner, [Janez Potočnik](#), poor air quality is the number one environmental cause of premature death in the EU with a toll that outstrips road traffic accidents. "It is an invisible killer and it prevents many people from living a fully active life. It already costs Europe €330bn-€940bn (£277bn-£789bn) a year in extra health costs and prematurely killed over 100,000 people a year," he said last year.

TramForward believes that government should do much more to encourage development of tram systems in our major cities, which are currently over-reliant on diesel buses for provision of public transport. Electric trams could replace buses on many of the major traffic arteries, not only drastically cutting the number of diesel-powered vehicles on the streets but also attracting car users on to public transport. Local transport bodies, which are having an increasing say in their own areas' spending plans, should look towards providing environmentally friendly public transport rather than building more roads and exacerbating the public health problem that more traffic will simply worsen.

LRTA Chairman, Andrew Braddock, said "the time has come to learn from our continental neighbours the huge benefits to air quality, reductions in traffic congestion and the quality of life that modern tramways bring".

## NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. *TramForward* is the campaigning arm of the Light Rail Transit Association.
2. The Light Rail Transit Association is the world's leading organisation campaigning for better public transport through light rail, tramway and metro systems in our towns and cities for 75 years. It also supports the revitalisation of suburban and rural transport through the application of light rail.
3. The LRTA acts through its network of local branches, which campaign for better transport in their localities.
4. Membership of the LRTA costs under 14p a day. To join, visit [www.lrta.org](http://www.lrta.org) or write to the Membership Secretary, LRTA, 38 Wolseley Road, Sale, Greater Manchester, M33 7AU. Members of the LRTA receive the monthly magazine *Tramways & Urban Transit* - written and read by experts in the field - and gain other benefits including discounts on videos and books, tours of transport systems and cut-price admission to selected transport sites.
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