

Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: Air Quality, HC 468

Tuesday 3 November 2020

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Members present: Neil Parish (Chair); Ian Byrne; Geraint Davies; Dave Doogan; Barry Gardiner; Dr Neil Hudson; Mrs Sheryll Murray.

Questions 167 - 219

Witnesses

I: Marvin Rees, Mayor of Bristol; Councillor Matthew Holmes, Deputy Leader of Derby City Council.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Marvin Rees and Councillor Matthew Holmes.

Q167 **Chair:** Welcome to our air quality inquiry. We are delighted this afternoon to have the Mayor of Bristol, Marvin Rees, and Councillor Matthew Holmes, deputy leader of Derby City Council. If you would like to give a little more of an introduction to yourselves, then we will make a start with the questions. Thank you both for joining us.

Marvin Rees: I am Marvin Rees, the Mayor of Bristol. I was elected in 2016. We have had an issue with air quality in the city for a long time, just like cities all over the UK. Since some legal action and getting some more investment, we have been upping the pace at which we are trying to get to the levels of compliance. It is important to point out that we are dealing with a legacy of decades of failure to deliver on the city's infrastructure that allows people to live lives that are lower impact, in terms of both climate change and the impact their everyday lifestyles have on our air quality. This is about personal behaviour, but it is a point I will probably make again. We need to reconceptualise, redesign and rebuild our cities so that low-impact lives are not the privilege of people with a bit of spare disposable income.

Councillor Holmes: It is good to see you. My name is Councillor Matthew Holmes. I am deputy leader of Derby City Council. My political role, or my cabinet portfolio, involves strategic transport planning and climate change among other things such as inward investment and regeneration. I am political lead on this area of policy. I have been working for some time now with council officers bringing forward our clean air proposals and many other measures in this area of policy as well. I hope that I can offer you some positive feedback and answer your questions so that I can contribute to the inquiry.

Q168 **Chair:** Thank you both very much for joining us this afternoon. Naturally, as the EFRA Select Committee, we are doing this inquiry into air quality, and have done them before, because we are very concerned about improving air quality across the country. How has the pandemic affected the economy and jobs in your city?

Marvin Rees: It has had a massive impact on jobs. Looking particularly at our hospitality and food culture sector, Bristol is known for having a big offering in that area. We have huge numbers of furloughs, with a disproportionately high impact on young people, and a lot of anxiety. Alongside that, we have started to see the consequences of the action we have taken to try to manage Covid, with an increase in mental health issues and domestic violence in the city. The impact on jobs, in the general population, is very large.

It has led to increased costs in our public services. You have to look at the impact on finance in its broadest sense. There is greater demand on our services. We had a 500% increase in people applying for the council



tax reduction scheme because of increasing levels of poverty, increasing food poverty and so forth. With Covid has had a positive impact on our air quality because fewer people were moving around so we came down to compliant levels. That does not mean we came down to compliance because it is obviously measured over a period, but there was an increase in compliant levels. We have tried to capture that with some of our recent interventions, but obviously that is an ongoing pressure.

Q169 Chair: To what extent have people been able to work from home in your area? To what extent do you think they may carry on working from home after the pandemic? Will working at home have a long-term effect on the air quality in Bristol?

Marvin Rees: That is going to be a challenge because the traffic levels have risen more recently. They will go down again with this latest lockdown, but we knew traffic levels were moving up again and, in some areas, were almost back to the level at which they were. There will be a shift towards homeworking in some areas, but there needs to be some very heavy qualifications around that. There are only certain jobs you can do from home. A lot of the jobs that pay the living wage or even below cannot be done from home, such as in care. We have to be careful about how that opportunity is aligned to people on higher incomes.

There is a big piece of work—dare I go back to it—in city design. Now is the opportunity to rethink our cities. How can we make working from home more possible while, at the same time, doing the really critical job of protecting our city centres and our high streets? If people are not coming to the middle of the city, we see the impact that has. We need to look at the immediate benefits of it, but then begin to deal with the unintended consequences of it where those consequences are negative.

Councillor Holmes: The city of Derby is the same as everywhere else. The impact of Covid is enormous. Some of those impacts are still to be known and are emerging. The ongoing impact of further restrictions is going to exacerbate that. One example in Derby specifically is Rolls-Royce in aerospace. We have a nuclear division as well, which is less impacted I believe, but civil aerospace is immensely impacted. The conversations I have had and the information I have received from Rolls-Royce suggest that it is going to take several years for that business to recover to pre-Covid levels. As you can imagine, the impact on local jobs is quite severe and the supply chains for a large manufacturing base like that are significantly impacted.

In general, businesses everywhere are impacted. With the emerging job losses, the situation is not going to be known for a while. We know the Government's support package and furloughs have protected some of that so far, but it is a fairly challenging picture. We are working very closely with our major employers, businesses, partners and stakeholders on a recovery plan already.

To your second question about the impact of Covid, for large public



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employers in Derby such as the NHS and the council, for example, it really has massively accelerated working from home. There has been a huge increase in that, which is one of the positives from Covid, if we take positives from this. It has accelerated a lot of those plans, which, in turn, should impact on the quality of air because there are fewer journeys, for example.

I would have thought that these figures are probably across the board, in most areas, certainly in cities. During the first lockdown in March, traffic fell to around 15% of pre-Covid levels, so a massive drop in travel or journeys. Then it started to creep up through April and June to around 25%. From mid-June onwards, we saw 60%, for example, and then a gradual increase through to August, up to around three-quarters of pre-Covid levels. When the schools reopened, we saw, on average, a daily increase back to about 95% of pre-Covid levels. The traffic certainly came back and those kinds of levels are constant at the moment, but we expect to see a sharp drop again as we move towards Thursday should Parliament make the decision tomorrow.

Q170 **Chair:** There are people travelling in cars now because they feel it is safer than travelling on public transport. To go back to the original part of my question, when, hopefully, the pandemic is eventually over, to what extent do you think people will go back on to public transport? How many more people do you think will be working at home? Will it make a significant difference in the long run to the number of car journeys in the city?

Councillor Holmes: There will be an impact. In the larger organisations, the public sector certainly, there is going to be a significant step change in how people work. The council, from personal experience, has adapted well in terms of working from home. There is an expectation that that is going to continue. There was some scepticism pre-Covid about how effective homeworking would be and how it would work, but it has been embraced and it has delivered far above expectations. We do not need to go back to having thousands of staff in the council house, for example. That may not be the case for the NHS because staff need to be on site. I work for the NHS as well as being a councillor. I am in a support role. I can do some of my work from home, but I cannot do all of it.

Yes, there will be an impact. We need to encourage that. We need to provide the infrastructure for that to happen. We need to encourage everybody who can work from home to continue to do so, not just because of Covid, but anyway. I think there will be a step change. It is too early yet to say at what level that will be, but I certainly hope in Derby that we are going to see a significant difference. The problem is that, at the moment, we are looking at 95% of traffic levels pre-Covid, so, if you want a figure, 5% is pretty much what it is currently making a difference at. Unscientifically, that is the answer right now.

Marvin Rees: Working from home is going to depend on a number of things. What kind of homes do people have? We have a housing crisis



now. Do people have the spare rooms? We have seen an increase in demand for four-bedroom homes within the city, but they are very expensive and hard to come by. Again, it needs the physical space. We are trying to build houses. If we build houses with the capacity in them for people to work from home, we will support that. We will be looking at putting hubs around the city as well. People might not be in their home, but they will be in their local community without the need to travel into the middle of Bristol. We need to build that into our new housing delivery.

There is a big question about digital access. We have a digital divide. If people are on wi-fi and have the hardware at home, they can participate. If they do not, and we know there is a digital divide, they will be unable to do so. There will be a big piece of work around employer practice too. How do companies manage workforces who are at home and, potentially even more challenging, some at home and some at work? We are getting anecdotal feedback that people have to clock on and do a certain number of hours, and the clock is saying, "You have to do these hours". It is breeding anxiety so you could see a difference in the nature of the relationship between employers and employees that, if not handled well, could turn into increased absenteeism and increased costs elsewhere in the economy.

Managing split staff is a challenge. Remembering the role of work, too, is important. Work is about producing stuff, but work is a big part of our identity, mental health, wellbeing and socialisation as well. If people are working at home isolated, we might anticipate interventions and costs turning up in other areas of our public life and services.

Chair: Yes, I agree with you. Working from home all the time can affect your mental state. The ideal solution is to be able to work from home part of the time and perhaps go into work part of the time, but this is going to take some management later on.

Q171 **Mrs Murray:** Gentlemen, before the pandemic, what progress were you making on reducing the air pollution from transport?

Councillor Holmes: Specifically in terms of the clean air zone that we are working on and progressing in Derby, we had a very high-profile eight-week consultation. We had the highest engagement, I believe, of any previous consultation. I, as the lead cabinet member, led on that from the front and presented the potential options to the city of Derby, as well as residents, businesses and stakeholders. The city of Derby is a very compact city and we have a much larger travel-to-work area, so we encouraged everybody to have their say.

The three options we put forward were a chargeable clean air zone to the city boundary, a smaller chargeable clean air zone focused on the city centre and a third option to provide traffic management to directly deal with the exceedance on a particular route. I was very open-minded, ensuring that we were very clear on the options and we were not making



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any presumptions about what we would do. Of those taking part, 70% wanted traffic management rather than a chargeable clean air zone, and that is what we have taken forward.

This involves, roughly, changes to junctions, restricting traffic and reducing the amount of traffic in the area of exceedance. We are making progress on that. It is a £10.5 million scheme for which the Government are providing the funding. Obviously, the delivery of that has been disrupted by Covid, but that has mainly been on the supply chain during lockdown. We are progressing. The first elements were due to be delivered this month. We would have to take a review of that in light of what is going to be happening this week most likely, but we are pressing ahead with that particular scheme. In a nutshell, that is our journey as Derby city in terms of specific air quality projects. We are doing far more than that, but that is the specific challenge.

Marvin Rees: We were working through our clean air zones. We did look at a diesel ban in a small area as well, which one Minister said was fine and the DFT said was not, but there you go. We were going through those options. Since Covid has come in, we have looked at a traffic management option just like Derby. We are working through the modelling to see what gets us to compliance in the shortest possible time.

On the clean air zones—dare I say it—it was a frustration of mine working with national Government on this. We were approached about our CAZ as though it was a single issue. It is a constant statement in local government that we have to play outside-half to Government Departments that do not join up. Clean air is not a single issue. There are multiple drivers of health inequalities. We have to think about the impact on hospitals, employers, businesses and so forth. While we were making a case that we need to think more broadly, we were being pressed and taken through the media for not meeting targets, when we were pointing out the impact of potential charging not just on low-income people but on everyone.

To give you one small example, one of the first objections to the diesel ban proposal, which was welcomed, came from our hospital because it is in the middle of the city. They said, “Hold on; you could inadvertently introduce increased costs to our supply chain essentially introducing a cut to the National Health Service”. When I mentioned this to the Minister, it was an absolute surprise. There had been no conversation with the Department of Health on the consequences of the clean air zone. We need that kind of multidimensional thinking to happen before we are pulled through the press.

Beyond that, there are a few other things. The clean air zones come as a last gasp because we have not done the work in the past to build the infrastructure that is decarbonised and offers clean transport. We are pushing through now on a mass transit system for the city and



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underground. It is worth about £4 billion. We should have built it 40 years ago. What do they say? The best time to plant a tree was 40 years ago. The second best time is today, so we are doing that work now. We have not put the infrastructure in place that provides people with a viable alternative to private cars. That is one of the problems. Therefore, we have not built a culture of using public transport. We have been driving up bus usage, but we have not done that effectively in the past.

Q172 **Mrs Murray:** My question was what progress you are making. Could you measure that progress? Could you give us an idea of what progress you are making or were making before the pandemic? I know you have said you are going to carry on with these things. Were you on course to make a massive amount of progress before March of this year?

Marvin Rees: No, not until the clean air zones were introduced. We have been driving people over to bus usage, but, in and of itself, at the rate of change, that is not going to get us to compliance in the shortest possible time compared to the introduction of a clean air zone or traffic management system. If we are hanging our hat simply on clean air zones, it is not enough. You have to support cities to build homes in the right places in the middle of the city and deliver the mass transit system.

Q173 **Mrs Murray:** What was your council doing besides introducing clean air zones?

Marvin Rees: We are trying to get people over into buses and introducing active travel, cycling and walking. We cannot get away from the fact that we need national Government to support us to deliver the infrastructure.

Q174 **Mrs Murray:** This inquiry is looking into a variety of things. Has local air quality changed at all since the lockdown in March? Have you measured it?

Marvin Rees: Yes. I said in my first answer that it got down to pollution levels that were in line with compliance.

Councillor Holmes: Obviously, it had an impact. When we went down to the levels we saw during lockdown, the air quality was much better. In the round, Derby is very committed to active travel and infrastructure improvements. We have been focusing on cycling in the last 20 years. We now have £161 million joint with Nottingham for a transforming cities fund for sustainable travel improvements and mobility zone funding. This is much wider for us than just implementing the measures for the clean air legal requirement. There is a lot of work ongoing and we have secured Government funding to do so much more.

We have an exciting future on this and we are confident that we are going to provide clean air across the city, above and beyond the interventions we are legally required to make with regard to the clean air zone. We are very positive about things. I agree, though. It is about a culture change, a modal shift and supplying homes within the city so that



the travel is not required any more. It is very difficult for us as a compact city, but all those things need to be considered. There is certainly a great amount of investment in Derby, tens of millions of pounds, that we are working on right now.

Q175 **Mrs Murray:** Do you have anything to add, Marvin? For instance, in the lockdown, you said you saw a considerable difference. Can you give us any idea as to what sort of difference that was?

Marvin Rees: We had empty streets. People just were not driving around. We have tried to capture that. We have put a bus gate on Bristol Bridge. We have stopped the city centre for through traffic. We have pedestrianised parts of the old city, widened pavements and increased the number of cycle lanes. The aim is to capture that. We put in the biggest order for biogas buses in the UK as well, so we now have biogas buses going around the city. Again, it takes money. We have talked to the core cities: for example, rather than individual cities ordering a small quantum of biogas buses, why do we not get together and order 3,000 between us? We need support to build that structure, to allow us to move in that financial way as cities have not had the chance to do in the past, so we get chapter change in what we do rather than just incremental change.

Q176 **Mrs Murray:** Could you give us a timescale on that? For instance, should we have moved a lot more quickly over the last 20 years?

Marvin Rees: It has been decades of failure. It is also a failure of the centralisation of Westminster decision making and funding. We do not have the funds available to us that allow us to move with the dynamism and innovation that we need or to be predictable in our city planning.

Q177 **Mrs Murray:** Again, is that over a long period?

Marvin Rees: Well, it is British politics, isn't it?

Q178 **Dr Hudson:** Talking about how lockdown traffic levels went right down, Matthew, in one of your answers, you said that you are probably seeing levels back up to 90% or 95% now. In previous sessions, we have had witnesses say that, yes, the traffic has come back up, but the air pollution and the measurements that have been made have lagged and have not come back up to those pre-lockdown levels. Is that your experience? Are the measurements you have made on air quality and pollutants back up to where they were or is there a lag, even though the traffic is back up to where it was? Are there any local views that you could give us?

Councillor Holmes: I would have to get the stats to you from officers on the actual levels of NO₂. During lockdown, they were well below the legal maximum levels. At times, with 95% of traffic pre-Covid, in Derby's case, where there was a particular exceedance, it is likely to be close to that again. But some of that is school travel, where the patterns have



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completely changed. Whereas we would see certain peaks in the morning and the evening, that behaviour is changing with staggered school times.

It is a moving feast really. When we say that the traffic in Derby has increased back to about 95% currently, the patterns have changed. There is a lot of analytic data that needs to be looked at to see how that is impacting. I do not think it is really going to settle down and we are not going to see a full picture until we have really moved out of the impact of Covid, to be honest with you. If you want specific data, that can be supplied, but I have to ask officers to send it to you.

Dr Hudson: That would be really helpful if you have any data that would inform us.

Chair: Put it in writing, please.

Q179 **Dr Hudson:** You make a very interesting point that behaviour has changed and patterns have changed. Broad measurements of percentage of traffic might be back where they were, but, if people's behaviour has changed, and that has had an indirect benefit for air quality, perhaps there could be some important take-home messages for advice going forward as to how we can take that on. Marvin, do you have anything to add on that side of things?

Marvin Rees: We had quite a dramatic change, at the high end, of about an 85% reduction in traffic, with the worst polluted areas losing around 72% of the pollutants in the air. We saw quite a dramatic change and people were saying that the experience of the city felt cleaner. It was probably somewhat psychological as well, but they certainly felt that the city was a lot cleaner. The challenge for us is really that there was a change in behaviours, but we know that old habits can prove to be very resilient.

We also have our bus use. We were doing very well at increasing the number of bus users in the city, with really high rates of change. Obviously, there is a concern about using public transport now. Our challenge is that, as people are going back to work, they are not necessarily jumping on the bus or the train to come in. That window of opportunity is so finely balanced. How do we begin to lock those benefits in?

Q180 **Geraint Davies:** The witnesses will know that the growth in the public health problem of pollution has been through the transfer to diesel to a large extent in the last 10 years, as well as the level of traffic. The Government have introduced a clean air strategy and an Environment Bill. Marvin, does the Environment Bill put too much responsibility on local government without the resources, particularly given that you cannot set diesel duty or build major motorways, so you are not completely in control of the environment that you need to control to control air quality?



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Marvin Rees: That is a real concern of ours. Tentatively—dare I say it—there sometimes seems to be a narrative: “We have left it to local authorities to do it and they ain’t got it done”. That is a real challenge. Delivering on these fronts takes resources. I say to some of the campaign groups that I am on the receiving end of in the city, “You will campaign for frontline services, but none of you comes and campaigns for lawyers and planners”. It is also backroom capacity that gets hit, which does the hard yards invisibly in offices to redesign our cities and get our projects across the line.

There is a crossover of power as well. One of our key drivers of concern is the M32. We do not control that. It comes right into the middle of the city. We are then accountable for areas over which we have no control. Sometimes, Government Departments come in and undermine local authority initiatives to clean up air. We might even look at the way Government Departments work. One of the biggest drivers of road journeys in the city is the NHS. I am not ragging on the NHS. When I dared to say that in meetings, people said I was attacking the NHS. I am not, but, if we are frank about it and we are thinking about road journeys, Government Departments have to think about the impact that their operations have on cities and how they are accountable to the local area.

Q181 **Geraint Davies:** On that, what more could be done in the Environment Bill? Do you agree that we want legally enforceable air quality limits within a certain timeframe, maybe including indoor air quality, but also including all-Government responsibility, rather than it just being DEFRA, so that the Department for Transport, the Department of Health and other Departments are working together, as you are trying to do, on a holistic basis for your services in Bristol? Is that right? What would you like to see in the Environment Bill? In particular, would you like to see legally enforceable legal limits?

Marvin Rees: Yes, potentially. I am absolutely open to that. There is certainly the job of getting Government Departments to work across each other so that, whatever standards and targets are set up, every Department knows that it has a responsibility for contributing to those standards. I would like to see in the Environment Bill an explicit recognition of the leadership role of cities and networks of cities in delivering clean air. That means giving us the predictable finance we need to reconceptualise, replan and rebuild our cities—where homes go, the energy systems we use and the transport systems. That is a 10, 15 or 20-year journey for cities.

At the moment, the way funding works, we are on a one or two-year horizon. We cannot possibly think that we are going to change the systems of life in our cities that allow people to live a low-impact life on a one or two-year horizon. We need more certainty in our finance.

Q182 **Geraint Davies:** Matthew, there are a couple of examples, in particular Coventry and Southampton, where they have planned to do clean air



zones and have then pulled out of doing it because they do not have the resources, particularly in light of the Covid pandemic. We can understand that. I am asking you the same question. Do you think the Environment Bill, in essence, thrusts extra responsibility on local government without the resources and, often, without the competence in road building, diesel duty or whatever it is to get the job done? Finally, what would you like to see in the Environment Bill?

Councillor Holmes: I would probably answer this in two parts, if you can gain some answers from my answers on that one, rather than specifically recommending elements of the Bill. In terms of the clean air zone, our experience locally is that it was challenging. The whole process was challenging. It was about capacity and skills to deliver at speed because it was all about the quickest possible time, which is fine because that was the legal challenge. We needed specific skills and knowledge that we did not have within a local authority. That is not the fault of Derby City Council. You will find that everywhere. It was reassuring that the Government agreed to fund the specific specialists and consultants that we needed to bring in for this task, so it did not have a financial impact on the council, although there was a resource impact.

In terms of the clean air zone, in our experience, we were able to bring the resources in. That principle needs to continue. Answering it in a slightly different way, in a wider aspect, if I go back to our transforming cities funding that we have jointly with Nottingham City Council, you can imagine that the £161 million that we have jointly to spend on sustainable travel infrastructure improvements represents major infrastructure improvements for our area. That has resource impacts, because the bid process was very intense and now we move forward with those particular measures, so there are resourcing impacts on our staff levels and expertise to deliver those things.

The Government need to recognise that, when we look at projects that are not necessarily the day-to-day activity of the council, such as capital spend, roads and transport, as well as all the standard services that we provide as local authorities for residents and businesses, we need to have an extra layer of resource and capacity at a local level. There needs to be recognition of that. There has been on clean air, but the main thing I would put across is the need to recognise the fact that local councils need the resources and the expertise, or the ability to bring in the expertise, within the budgets that are passed through to local government and not just to have to absorb those necessarily in every instance.

Q183 **Geraint Davies:** Marvin, there has been some debate on the balance between local democracy and central management, and the Government want to centralise things. At the same time, they want to give responsibility to local government without the resources. That has been the allegation. Do you feel you want to do more with more? What more powers would you like and what would that mean? Without running into the individual figures, what are we talking about? How much more



support do we need to give local government so it has a real chance at making a real difference to clean air?

Marvin Rees: The way I describe it is having a bankable partnership. By that, I do not mean a blank cheque. Come upstream with us and help us develop the solutions. This is the first time I have been elected, but I find it quite remarkable that the relationship between me and Government, who are supposed to be in co-leadership and co-governance, becomes one of saying, "Send us your Excel sheet in a couple of years and we'll tell you whether it meets the criteria". That is not co-leadership.

The kind of relationship I want involves working upstream, thinking about what cities need to be, and thinking about how we decarbonise our systems and build life into the future design of cities. Then we can develop solutions that we know are going to cross the line because we worked on them together. The costs then fall out of that. Take the mass transit system as an example of that. I would not want to turn up in just two years and say, "It costs £4 billion. Can we talk now?" I would much prefer them to come and say, "It is fantastic that you are trying to do that. It decarbonises transport for a growing city". We are supposed to grow by about 100,000 people over the next 25 years. "Let us work with you on that and make it right". It is not a relationship that is working as well as I would like it to or as well as the country or the world needs.

Q184 **Geraint Davies:** Matthew, do you feel that a closer working partnership is preferable to saying, "Here is some money if you are lucky and, if you are not, you do not get it. Here is some responsibility and, if you are lucky, you might get it"? Would a very closely knit working partnership where we are solving these problems together, centrally and locally, be a better approach? Do you find it a bit distant?

Councillor Holmes: It is a fine line because I would not want to have measures imposed on Derby city. It was right that we had the option to go out to the public, devise our own options or solutions to the individual problems, devise what we feel is best for our city and our region, and work with Government on that. It is a fine line. We do not want it top-down: "You must do this and this is how you must do it. We are telling you and here you are. Off you go and deliver this". It needs to be a partnership.

I certainly would like a positive relationship with the relevant Ministers, civil servants and Departments to deliver the things we want to deliver as a city. When Government do release money—as I say, we are getting tens of millions of pounds to deliver very positive things in this area—it is only right that Government should have an interest in that to ensure that it is being delivered in a way that contributes not only to local ambitions but to the Government's ambitions, because it is a win-win for everybody. We deliver clean air. We deliver action on climate change and all those other things that we need to do locally as our responsibility. That obviously delivers the Government's priorities as well, so it is definitely a partnership.



Q185 **Dr Hudson:** Thank you very much to Marvin and Matthew for being before us today. We really appreciate that. I wanted to move on now to Government and public sector leadership. You have touched on the partnership and the communication side of things. Do you feel that your local residents and businesses understand why we need to take action on air quality? Do you feel that central Government and local government need to do more to make a case to the local electorate as to what needs to be done?

Councillor Holmes: My general comment on this, being the lead member locally, is that we have to strike a balance and bring the public with us. I have always believed this as a local politician, whether I am in opposition or in control of the council. It has to be a balance because, to facilitate modal shift, there has to be investment, a journey and an understanding that we are all working on this together. It is difficult. We have made some changes with regards to tranche 1 Covid emergency transport measures. While they are welcomed by some, they are not welcomed by others. There is a lot of debate over why we are doing these things and a lot of scepticism, I have to say.

For us in Derby, we have a very active travel section of the population that embraces walking, cycling, public transport and so on, but it is an incredibly hard issue to deal with as a local politician and to bring people along with us. I think that was reflected in the consultation on our clean air zones: 70% of people preferred a non-chargeable zone as the solution. That just gives you an insight into the journey that we have to go on, to provide a more sustainable travel future. It is not going to be easy, and changing hearts and minds is not going to be easy either. Modal shift is going to be even tougher. It is about very small steps, ensuring that we take people with us and do not just try to impose measures overtly on the public, which I do not think will work or be accepted.

Marvin Rees: People do understand in the city. It is a city with a strong record of being concerned about the environment, nature and air quality, so it is there. It is well publicised. We estimate around 300 deaths a year are related to poor quality of our air. That is well-rehearsed. The challenge comes in the nature of what we do to get there and the transition to that cleaner air. Just like Matthew said, people are really concerned about charging, as are we. As we go into the economic depression now and people are losing their jobs, do we then introduce more charges to households and small businesses?

When we were initially looking at the transition, one of the reasons why we looked at a diesel option was that we ran the numbers and we could see that, for households earning less than £25,000 a year, the diesel option was going to impact about 500 of them. The alternatives were impacting about 5,000 households earning less than £25,000 a year. It is really important that we do think about those everyday concerns of people.



I was at an event and, when we were talking about our clean air consultation, I talked to one clean air campaigner. That can be one of the issues, in that they tend to lose sight of getting clean air and, instead, do not like cars. I made the point that, for some people, clean air was not the immediate threat to their existence. It could be stabbing. It could be poverty. She said, "How many people get stabbed?" I said, "In your world, none, but I have communities in which this is a very real consideration for families." That lack of respect for the immediate challenges people are facing day to day can undermine our ability to bring people with us. We lose the democratic mandate for this, which is a disruption to people's lives as they are currently lived.

Q186 Dr Hudson: Thank you very much. That is very helpful. In terms of public sector leadership and demonstrating by example, could you give us your thoughts and do you have any examples? Are you taking steps yourself, as local authorities and councils, to reduce your impact on air pollution, demonstrating to local people, for example, through your own fleet of vehicles or what the council may particularly buy? Do you feel that, by doing that, it is making a difference? Can you give us some examples and your thoughts on that?

Marvin Rees: We are trying to move our own fleet over to electric vehicles. We have electric bikes on hand to staff. We are part of the bike-to-work scheme, encouraging people to use bikes. We are also just launching a scheme now where we will have receipt of electric commercial vehicles and companies will be able to take those vehicles on loan just to experience that it is possible to survive with electric vehicles. We are also running a number of initiatives, including rolling out 200 EV charging points across the city, to make the low-impact life and changing vehicle type more convenient. We are working on many fronts. We are constantly promoting active travel within the city, along with our city partners across universities, health services, police, colleges and schools.

Q187 Dr Hudson: Do you feel that is making a difference?

Marvin Rees: I do. On active travel, it is interesting. We have a great reputation for cycling in Bristol. That is true, but there is a class dynamic to that. A lot of people cycle in certain parts of the city. Thinking about the dynamics, it is not just about whether you want to ride a bike. Can you store it in your home? Is your home big enough or are they clogging up the pathways? Sometimes, people do not take that into account. A nice big hallway in Clifton is much better for a bike than a two-up two-down in Easton, for example. Those can be real challenges.

Overall, the message is a very strong one about the need to improve our air quality. We need to engage in what some of the unions have called the just transition, making sure that, in the process of transitioning and delivering those better environmental standards, we are not asking low-income people, ordinary people, to pay a disproportionate price. That will, in and of itself, breed a political backlash, I would suggest, and we would lose our mandate to make the change we need.



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Q188 **Dr Hudson:** Thank you. That is very helpful. Matthew, do you have any thoughts from Derby City Council about what you are doing to reduce the impact of pollution?

Councillor Holmes: We have made the investment. Over the last 20 years, we have made 5 km of cycling improvements per year. We have another £10 million that we are going to invest in cycling or walking improvements. We have e-cargo bikes being rolled out very shortly across the city, which is going to be really interesting for businesses to use to transport goods across the city with zero emissions. We want to become a future fuels hydrogen centre of excellence in Derby as well. We are carrying out some studies on that side of things. Our future manufacturing ambitions are in hydrogen. Our cycling infrastructure is good already, but it is going to be improving. We will also roll out e-scooter pilots imminently. We are really on the forefront, along with several other cities, in moving towards more sustainable travel.

Q189 **Dr Hudson:** What about your council fleets of vehicles and things like that?

Councillor Holmes: We have already started transitioning towards electric vehicles and low-emission vehicles. That is a role that every single local authority has the responsibility to play, because the simple fact is that you have to lead by example. Not everyone can do what I do. I am a keen cyclist. I am fortunate to live near both of my places of work, whether it is the council or the local NHS hospital. I am able to cycle and I am physically active in that way. Personally, I do what I can to lead from the front, but local authorities must do that in a wider sense as well. How are we going to get local businesses and the general public to follow us if we do not lead by example? Absolutely, yes, we need to be doing everything we are telling other people to do and supporting other people to do. We need to do it ourselves, and that is what we are doing.

Q190 **Dr Hudson:** Do you feel that, when you are leading by example, you are getting some positive feedback from local people saying, "I have noticed your fleet of vehicles", and so on, and they are more likely to come on board with the message? Are you getting that feedback or is that anecdotal?

Councillor Holmes: Yes. Again, though, it is a challenge because we have to balance very tight budgets now. We have pressures on our children's services. We have the impact of Covid. Now, yes, we are getting some Government support for those things. However, when we budget set, each year, it is a huge challenge. For us, it is a balance to say, on one hand, we are promoting the rollout of electric vehicles. Whether that is Government funding or local funding, it is irrelevant really in the public's eyes. It is the perception of priorities and it is how you sell why it is important to invest in some green technologies and cycle lane improvements etc, as opposed to necessarily putting tens of millions of pounds into another area of council services.



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For me, it is very difficult sometimes to sell that message. We have to do that and be positive about it, but it is a challenge. The general public, quite rightly, looks at it and says, "You are going to be spending tens of millions of pounds on sustainable transport. Personally, I have an issue in this area of council services that I would probably prefer that money to be invested in". That is the debate. That is the challenge. We have to be proactive to sell this and the benefits of making those investments.

Q191 Chair: Both of you have talked about trying to balance the difference between those who want to cycle and reduce the number of cars and those who want to stay in their cars. Should they be taking their children to school in a car? Can they walk to school or can they cycle, depending on the safety? I accept all that, but there are a lot of competing things in society and it is a difficult question to ask. How do you balance the two or three sections of society?

Councillor Holmes: I would answer this honestly. At the end of the day, I personally believe that it is a balance and we need to improve transport infrastructure and not necessarily restrict it. For example, the A38 junction improvement programme is led by Highways England but will have a huge positive impact on Derby. It is going to cause mass disruption while it is occurring. We have to be clear about that, but it will have a huge impact. That is a significant transport infrastructure improvement for our area and our city. That is something that climate change and environmental campaigners will probably say should not be happening.

I believe that the future of transport is a mixture. Zero-emission, clean technologies will have a place. Mass transit and personal transport will have a place, but balanced with more sustainable transport. It is about the infrastructure. The priority, for me, is not just building really high-quality infrastructure for local cities and towns, with links between them, but moving very rapidly towards zero-emission and clean technology. That is, for me, the key.

Marvin Rees: Our emphasis in the city has been on trying to provide people with a viable alternative, not just going after people so that they feel put upon. We know we need to take some action that is going to put people out on occasion. We have done that with the bus gate on Bristol Bridge, the closure of Baldwin Street and so forth. We had some response to that, but we could be very clear about why we were doing that, what we were pointing at and what was going to be on offer.

To go back to the point I made earlier about the predictability of finance in city planning, we have written a plan. We have something called the Bristol one city plan. We have written it with the city. It points to Bristol in 2050. What do we want to be in 2050 and what do we need to do every year in sequence to get there? Our air quality is a part of that plan. If we can offer the city more certainty that we will be delivering these things, which means having that bankable partnership with Government in agreeing this plan and pushing towards it, it allows us to make the



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case for the short-term disruptions in their lives that they will go through to realise this better city.

At the moment, our ability to guarantee—I say that word carefully—the future that we say we are going to offer is limited. People experience a series of disconnected disruptions because the finance is not there to deliver an overarching city story, which is about transport, but, as we just heard, is all about taking care of your hunger needs and your mental health, delivering on all fronts at the same time. Recasting that relationship between local authorities and central Government and allowing that certainty of finance are essential to this.

Q192 **Barry Gardiner:** Thank you so much to our witnesses this afternoon, who have really broadened out our understanding of the challenges that local government is facing. Marvin, ClientEarth has stressed the urgency of implementing the clean air zones. I know that, in Bristol, you are keen to move forward on that. Tell us how you are proposing to do this and what problems you may be encountering with establishing stable baselines for monitoring and evaluation, given the changes that have happened through Covid. What are you doing to take the public with you on that journey?

Marvin Rees: I will say something about the public and then ClientEarth. First of all, in taking the public with us, it is a constant conversation that I have in the city: “If I am doing 10 things, you may not like one, but did you like the other nine?” Our credibility and our ability to do things that some people do not like depends on us delivering things they do like in areas such as tackling child hunger, domestic violence, supporting work experience for people, tackling homelessness and supporting small business. Then we earn the right and the currency to take disruptive action. People will trust what we are trying to do even if they do not like it.

Barry Gardiner: It is called leadership, isn't it?

Marvin Rees: I hope so. That is what we have done. It is about having a broad agenda that gives evidence that you care about people. Secondly, I must say, as a first-time politician, I was a bit disappointed with ClientEarth and its approach. As a local authority leader, I can line up 1,000 people around the block with their single issue that they want to pursue who would never take any responsibility for the interdependencies of that issue or the other priorities that we have. I found ClientEarth's approach was simply a single-issue approach. It threatened Government and Government threatened us, so we had this pressure on this single issue without taking account of the 1,001 other issues we had to deal with. I thought it was a less than satisfactory approach and did not help local government in taking on the full range of challenges we have.

Having said that, we have pressed on with our clean air zones. We recognise we have a moral, planetary and legal responsibility to deliver compliance in the shortest possible time. We have gone out for



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consultation. We have looked at the two charging options of CAZ C and CAZ D. We are looking at a traffic management option as well. Those are running themselves through the modelling now to see which one delivers the highest.

Q193 **Barry Gardiner:** Do you want to elaborate on what CAZ C and CAZ D are, because the public will be watching this?

Marvin Rees: CAZ D charges non-compliant vehicles including private cars. CAZ C charges non-compliant vehicles excluding private cars. We have to think about the impact on households in that mix.

Q194 **Barry Gardiner:** Have you had to make any modifications to your plans and how you are going to go about implementing them as a result of the impact of Covid?

Marvin Rees: No, not really. It threw up a new option, the traffic management option, which is a non-charging option. We are pursuing that. We talked to Government and they said, "You can pursue that, but we still want you to pursue the charging options in your modelling so everything is covered".

We have continually been stressing the impact on households and small businesses. We are going to see unemployment and businesses stretched to the hilt. We cannot deal with this as a single-issue topic; otherwise we will lose the dressing room. We have to make sure that the financial package that Government provide to cities and local authorities all over the place through this challenge is fit for the task we face, which is about not just surviving but making sure that we maintain the mandate to deliver on our 2030 or 2035 targets, wherever people have pitched themselves.

Q195 **Barry Gardiner:** Thanks very much. You have expressed very clearly the way in which the Government and local authorities need to work together on this and the joined-up nature that needs to be in place across Government Departments. If I were to defend ClientEarth, I would say that, of course, it is an advocate for one party, namely the environment. It is seeking to show that we failed by 2010 to comply with the legal obligations we had as a country and that we have failed again for the past decade.

Marvin Rees: Can I just say that I am not trying to get into a bust-up with ClientEarth?

Barry Gardiner: I was trying to save you from one.

Marvin Rees: When you are dealing with a national Government who, in some sense, have untold resources, it is a different conversation from dealing with local government, which has to balance its budget in a wickedly complicated world. You need to adjust. The aim is to get the outcomes you want, not to win a fight, because you can win a fight and not get the outcomes.



Q196 **Barry Gardiner:** As a former chair of finance on a council, I know exactly what you are saying. Matthew, in Derby, you have decided not to pursue a clean air zone but to introduce a traffic management plan to improve traffic flow. I noticed that your submission said that you are improving traffic flow rather than reducing it. This, according to your council's submission, will mean increasing flows on other roads. I know you are taking other steps and other measures as well, but I wondered to what extent this is because you only have £4.5 million whereas Bristol has £113 million? Do they have more money because they have been more ambitious? Which way round is it?

Councillor Holmes: I will just go back to the comments on ClientEarth. We had correspondence from ClientEarth regarding the timescales, feasibility and submission of our particular bid. We made that decision to tackle our legal requirement, which is the exceedance in a particular area of the city. We are complying with that and we understood the very clear diktat that we must move forward as quickly as possible. All our modelling shows that we are not going to create exceedance elsewhere with what we are doing. The traffic management and the changes—this involves some physical changes as well—will bring it below exceedance. A lot of the investment and the actual money we are spending is on that technology to measure that and control it.

We are confident that we are doing exactly what we are being asked, not just by ClientEarth via the Government but morally in terms of our commitment to clean air. That extends far wider in the general work that we are going to be doing in the coming years with the very significant funding that we have.

Q197 **Barry Gardiner:** Have you managed to establish those baselines of what the traffic flows were and what the emissions as a result of those flows have been? Do you know exactly how they will come down?

Councillor Holmes: Yes, the modelling has been well tested and was part of our process. I am sure that ClientEarth and many others have examined that to make sure that we are delivering exactly what we are legally required to do. A lot of the technology that is going to be installed as part of the measures will be able to evidence that as well moving forward, once this scheme is in place.

Q198 **Barry Gardiner:** Are you using the money that Government have given for low-traffic neighbourhoods? Do you think that that initiative is a fair and equitable one given that the poorest residents now find traffic often increasing the congestion on the main arterial routes where many of the poorest people live? I know a number of colleagues around the country have spoken with me about the problems they are encountering with these low-traffic neighbourhood implementations. I just wondered how it was working out for you both and how it was being integrated into your plans.



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Marvin Rees: We are spending that money and it has been great to have the money released. We have moved quite rapidly on widening pavements and introducing cycle lanes and low-traffic neighbourhoods.

The challenge you make about the displacement is a good one. It is one of those areas where we have to think about unintended consequences. I will check with my team on how it is actually playing itself out and whether there are any unintended inequalities playing out of this. But we certainly support the idea and the whole drive towards low-traffic neighbourhoods.

Councillor Holmes: I can give you examples of what we have done very recently. We have had two large-scale segregated cycle lanes. We have had two schemes to reduce traffic in village suburbs and to reroute traffic, and three schemes around the city centre aimed at improving cycling and walking routes, making space available for social distancing etc.

Q199 **Barry Gardiner:** Is that with the low-traffic neighbourhood—LTN—money?

Councillor Holmes: This was for tranche 1 emergency active travel measures.

Q200 **Barry Gardiner:** What impact do you expect your approach to have? What are your baselines? How are you measuring and evaluating what you are doing?

Councillor Holmes: We have roadside measurements that we use and they led to the exceedance that we are dealing with through our clean air zone scheme. We continue to monitor those. Currently, the only area of exceedance remains the area that we are dealing with via the clean air zone implementation. But we want to see them drop and the only way we can do that is by investing. We are legally required to ensure that we measure our pollutants in the air, and we will continue to do so, but I want to get to a point where, while we are taking measurements, they are very low and we know that we are delivering clean air to the city. That needs to happen as rapidly as possible.

Q201 **Barry Gardiner:** You have no concerns that you might be displacing emissions into other areas by the strategy that you are adopting.

Councillor Holmes: Not with the clean air zone implementation that we are putting forward, no.

Marvin Rees: We have always anticipated some displacement as well because the approach to compliance has been nicely described to me as almost like a big top tent. You have a level and then you have some spikes in different parts of the city. We were measured on certain streets and those streets that are compliant will end up with more traffic going there because we are pushing the peaks down, but there will be an increase in some other areas.



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Our aim is to make sure that, as we push the peaks down, we are not having the same portion of increase in those areas that are currently compliant. There is going to be some displacement, but the point you made about fairness within that is an important one, which we are always trying to take into account.

Q202 Barry Gardiner: I was supposed to be talking about clean air zones and I have focused my comments on that but, of course, this inquiry is actually about clean air strategy, not just the zones. Most of our attention today has focused on the zones and it would be very interesting to hear from you about what your strategy is, not just in transport but in dealing with industry, working with local industry and looking to clean up the air in other ways. Marvin, you touched on it when you spoke about housing, which is fundamentally important, but we need to broaden out our conception of what clean air is about.

Marvin Rees: I have raised this point a number of times with some of the campaign groups in the city. We have 160,000-odd people in Bristol. We are going to grow by 100,000-odd over the next 25 years. We have a housing crisis with 12,000 people on the waiting list and 600-odd families in temporary accommodation. The kind of homes we build and where we build them have been the biggest determinants of our impact on the planet. If we build centrally in active travel areas, people can travel actively. If we are sticking them on housing estates on the edge of the city, we will build in transport dependency and everything. It is one of the missed elements of the housing crisis. Herein is our solution. Support to tackle the crisis, as well as in the right ways, is really important for us.

We have looked at other areas. Equipment on construction sites is a huge consideration for us, as well as wood burners. It is a very fashionable item, interestingly, in some of the areas that you would most associate with environmental activism. I have challenged one of the campaign groups. I will not name it because I do not want to end up in any disputes with anyone. I asked, "Why don't you talk about wood burners?" The truth is because it is their activist base. We need some guidance and support in our cities to take action on solid fuel burners.

Councillor Holmes: It is timely because the cabinet is about to receive a paper on this exact issue that brings it all together, promoting low-emission transport, planning and infrastructure, traffic management, public information, fleet efficiency and low-emission strategies. All those things are much more than just talking about a clean air zone implementation. It is a big piece of work and, if the cabinet agrees, we are going to be adopting a wide-ranging strategy that brings that all together in multiple strands, so that we can all work together across all the directorates within the council to deliver clean air for the city.

It is an exciting future for us, and we are committed to delivering on that. Like climate change, it spans every service area within a local authority. It is not just about specific measures to deal with certain roadside exceedances; it has to be far larger than that. We certainly recognise that



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in Derby city and we are moving forward with a strategy to pull all those strands together.

Barry Gardiner: Indeed, thank you very much. I would urge you both to look at your councils' own procurement processes, which are vital in this too.

Q203 **Ian Byrne:** I feel like David Cameron with Nick Clegg, saying to Marvin, "I agree with everything you are saying". Marvin has outlined a lot of the issues that we are facing in Liverpool. We have issues in Liverpool with the temporary cycle lanes going through lower-income areas. That is where the traffic is focused. We are getting congestion and it is causing a lot of kickback.

My worry is that some of the temporary measures are actually causing people to rally against the need to tackle air pollution. How do we take people with us? Marvin has touched on it before and Matthew has to a degree. How do we take the people on that journey? We are going to have to go on a journey to solve the issues that we want to solve. It is hugely important that people from right across the community come with us. I would like to know about your experiences and anything moving forward.

Councillor Holmes: That is absolutely right. I have described some of the emergency active travel measures that we have put into place and not all of them have been well received. The cycle groups have been happy in the main, and I think that several of the schemes have merits, maybe not in the form that they are currently in. Maybe, like you say, we need to learn lessons, listen to feedback and make improvements in the longer term based on understanding what was good and what was not so good.

I do not know if other authorities have done this, but we have a review point put in specifically when we put a bid in to Government so that we have the ability to review our measures. That will very shortly be going on. We actually removed one of the temporary cycle lanes. You have to be brave like that. If there needs to be a change, sometimes you have to be brave enough to do that, and not just say, "It is there; get used to it" and be unwilling to make a compromise.

That is how you build up public confidence, by saying, "We will try things that we normally would not try in normal times because we are not living through normal times at the moment. We will learn from those experiences and be very open". It is about listening to the local communities and to the feedback of local councillors so that, if we do move forward with more permanent schemes, they have their say. They are the ones who make that decision to move forward and it is not imposed on them.

Marvin Rees: We have put ours in temporarily, even a pedestrianisation of the old city. There was a bit of a kickback but we made the point: "We are putting it in place and then we are going to work with you to make it



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work. It is temporary. It is not set in stone". There are areas where they have come out now up in Clifton. Traders were not particularly happy about the impact and we have to respect and recognise that.

In the part of Bristol where I live, there is a dispute at the moment between people who want to ban cars from a certain road and the traders on the road who want the cars to continue to have access. My point to them has been that the aim is to improve the quality of the road. Cars are a part of that, but let us have the conversation about how we get a better road. If cars come into it, we will talk like adults about how we get there.

We have been open to flexing. There is a cycle lane in the middle of the city that we introduced that we have now discovered has totally messed up the bus route that uses that bit of the city, causing delays. We have talked to the bus company and we are going to make changes to that. We have approached it with that flexibility.

In some sense, we have earned the right to try things out because we set out to listen in the first instance. Many of our city partners believe that.

Q204 Ian Byrne: We had this discussion in one of the previous sessions. Do people understand the severity of what this is doing to the health of people in their communities? I do not think there is an innate understanding in Liverpool of the havoc that it is wreaking—from children to the older population. Maybe if we were better at putting that message out, we could take people on that journey, not terrify them but give them an understanding of why we need to do these things.

Marvin Rees: There is a broad awareness in Bristol, particularly among young people—they study it in school and so forth—that air quality is of critical importance. But the point I constantly make is that other things are of critical health importance to people as well. Going to prison is of critical importance. I used an extreme example earlier on, but we did have violent crime on the streets of the city.

We have to respect the immediate challenges that people are facing right here, right now. For some people, the existential threat to their existence is not air quality but the safety of the streets. Their immediate concern is domestic violence. I am not trying to jump off the issue, but we earn the right to step into people's lives when we respect the challenges they tell us they are facing today, like feeding their children. I cannot stress that point enough. Without that credibility, we undermine our ability to lead the city.

Q205 Ian Byrne: Have you received the support and funding you need from Government to implement your plans?

Councillor Holmes: Yes, in our experience. Derby city has been very fortunate in having a fully funded clean air project. We have received very significant funding for our wider ambitions with transforming cities, jointly with Nottingham. Mobility zone funding has come our way as well.



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In tranche 1 and the forthcoming tranche 2, we have had funding from Government to do these things.

My experience, as the lead cabinet member in these areas, has been a positive one in terms of funding. Officers have not had to come to me to say that we need to review the capital schemes to transfer money to deliver some of these things. Government support of Derby city has been very good, and that is the reality that I have in this city.

Q206 Ian Byrne: Thank you, Matthew. You are in a very fortunate position with what you are talking to us about there, certainly with my experience of local government.

Marvin Rees: I am going to say yes and no. Yes, in the sense that we have been able to draw down money for particular projects in particular parts of the city. We have spent that money on cycle lanes, widening pavements, pedestrianisation and so forth.

Where I am going to say no is that I am not confident that we have the money to support a just transition, to make sure that the burden of our system change does not fall proportionately on the shoulders of lower-income people or just ordinary people trying to get by.

Where I will also say no is that we cannot have a patch-and-mend approach to transforming our city systems. If we are serious about clean air, decarbonising our city and bringing nature into the way our cities work, we have to go back and think about how we redesign our cities and rebuild them. They have grown historically with no regard to air quality, climate and nature. Now we need to think, "That is not good enough where we are". We need to redesign our housing systems, transport systems, waste systems and energy systems so that people can live a low-impact life without even thinking about it.

When people get on our biogas buses, they are not thinking, "I am now not on a diesel bus". They are just on the bus. That city system offering is what we have to get to. To us, it takes funding and that is not with us at the moment.

Ian Byrne: Thanks to our witnesses for their excellent answers.

Chair: Marvin, you make an interesting point that, when people go on a bus, they do not necessarily work out what that bus is and how green or otherwise it is. That is a message we have to get over loud and clear.

Q207 Geraint Davies: I want to ask about health inequalities. The witnesses will know that poorer people tend to live near to busier roads in more overcrowded conditions and are more subject, therefore, to all the problems of hearts, minds and lungs that are associated with air pollution. In addition, we now know that poorer people are more likely to get Covid as well because there is an air pollution link with Covid; in Britain, something like 15% of the cases now and something like 6,000 deaths have been linked to air pollution. Those will be disproportionately



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concentrated in poorer communities. What are you doing to focus fire on reducing air pollution in poorer neighbourhoods, both outside and, in so far as you can, inside?

Councillor Holmes: Our strategy as a city is to deliver clean air and improvements across the city. We do not distinguish any area above any other in terms of the measures that we are going to be putting into place. Every area is going to get its fair share of improvements and investment to ensure that we deliver air quality across the city.

Q208 **Geraint Davies:** Are you focusing on the dirtiest bits first?

Councillor Holmes: Yes. The recognition in terms of our clean air zone is a street called Stafford street. Not many people will know it if they do not know the area of Derby city, but the pavement is fairly narrow and you literally have the doors of the properties very close to the roadside. Extra focus needs to be put in those areas where we have residents living mostly within the city boundary with very busy trunk roads very close to where they live. Extra focus needs to be on that to ensure that they have clean air.

We want to deliver clean air across the city. Significant focus needs to be on the city centre because that is where a lot of the congestion and traffic is, but it is also where some of our major trunk roads are. Being a very compact city, our entire city footprint could fit inside some of the largest city centres. You can imagine that it is more of a holistic view for us. We deal with clean air across the whole of the footprint of the city because of our geographic size.

Q209 **Geraint Davies:** Marvin, what are you doing? Obviously, there is this relationship between poor air quality, poverty and health inequalities. People who are poor suffer more because they are near busy roads. What are you doing, if anything, about that?

Marvin Rees: That is where we are targeting some of our work on low-traffic neighbourhoods. I would add the school drop-offs to that. We have been piloting closing streets during school drop-off and pick-up. We can work with the school and local community to make that real. There are those targeted interventions. Our public health team have been teaching people to ride bikes in targeted communities as well. It is surprising how much confidence people will need.

Can I come back to the CAZ? That is where we recognise that it is a very blunt tool. You choose a set number of streets around the city and you say, "Get those to levels of compliance". There is no nuance in that. There is no consideration of the inequalities and the impacts on health inequalities. Yet that is where all the energy is driven. That is where the threat of legal action is driven, rather than talking to us and working out how we deliver compliance in general, which is what we want to do across the whole city, but also it is about how we tackle inequalities with our challenging budgetary situations.



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Housing, as you mentioned it, is an interesting issue for us at the moment. I grew up in Easton on Stapleton Road, which for a while had a bit of a name for itself, but that area is gentrifying quite quickly now. People on low incomes are being pushed out of those inner-city areas that were particularly subject to poor air and being moved out of the city centre, which may add an interesting dynamic. Houses are £400,000, approaching £500,000, in areas that were previously seen as no-go zones, and we are having to work out what that means.

One of the things that we are trying to do is make sure that we have mixed tenure developments as well so that, in any part of Bristol, it is not just poor people who live there; so that we have a whole mix of incomes living together.

Q210 Geraint Davies: That is very interesting. In terms of asking what national Government can do to reduce health inequalities from air pollution, we have had witnesses who have suggested that, if there are strict legal guidelines, for instance 10 micrograms per cubic metre for PM2.5 by 2030, which is a WHO ambition, the focus will be on areas that exceed those. They, by definition, will be the most polluted areas, which will tend to be the poorest areas. The suggestion is that, if the Government introduce a strict legally enforceable air pollution limit, that should help health inequality and help focus it in that way. Would you agree with that locally, Marvin?

Marvin Rees: I would welcome limits as long as we get to work it through together, look at the timeline and look at how we get to support people to live within any limits.

If I were to ask for a single thing now, we have 100 biogas buses on the streets of Bristol. The bus service is under incredible pressure because the number of users has fallen through the floor. Any subsidy to a private bus company should be in a transition to local authority ownership of that bus company. It should not be free money in the first instance. It would be fantastic if the decision over our bus fleet was not accountable to a board in Aberdeen but accountable locally. If Government came alongside us and other cities, whether they are going for electric or biogas, and helped us buy 3,000 biogas buses en masse, we could transform the public transport offering almost overnight. We could say to people that it is a clean alternative and it is a public transport system. Then we have a viable alternative to the cars in the city at the same time as supporting the delivery of our mass transit system around there.

City leaders tell each other about their best practice and about a project in this community here or that community there. We can all tell each other stories about best practice, but at the end of the day you have to pay for it. As a local authority leader, my first question is how much it cost and where I am going to get the money to do it. That is what we need. We need to frontload investment in green infrastructure today, get some money in the economy and benefit from decarbonising any prospect of economic growth.



Q211 **Geraint Davies:** I think you are saying to us that local government needs the ability to have a holistic approach to public transport, public building, planning, where people can go and how they live. In the case of buses, they should be run by the local authorities so that they net into their other ambitions. An atomised approach, in the hope that it will all fall together at the end of the day, does not work.

Marvin Rees: It was a hugely missed opportunity. Transport is a public good that needs to be right. It is a major strategic interest and it cannot be left up to boards that are not accountable to the places in which they are offering the service. That just does not stack up to me.

I am really sorry. I have a cabinet starting at 4 pm.

Chair: Yes, I understand you have. Could I hand over to Dave Doogan to ask a question, please, before Marvin goes? Marvin, if you would like to answer quickly, then we will let you escape. I appreciate your time and effort today.

Marvin Rees: No problem, I hope it is useful.

Q212 **Dave Doogan:** Marvin, I have been listening intently, as a former councillor, to the challenges you face and I recognise a great many of them. There is a particular point I would like clarity on. Without complaining, on a blank sheet of paper in terms of a plan going forward in partnership with Government, what would Government funding look like, not just the quantum but the ambition and the shared responsibilities between city authorities, local authorities and central UK Government?

Marvin Rees: I would like a cross-departmental team to commit a period of time to come down and work with us on this 30-year plan we have put on the table for Bristol development. That is not just a conversation with me. The one city plan has been written by us, the universities, campaign groups, unions, schools, businesses and the chamber of commerce. I would like them to come down and agree on whether they think this is a good sense of direction. We would love to draw on their expertise. Let us begin to put some realistic numbers against it.

One of the things that Government could do, rather than just fund it—we are not asking for a blank sheet—is help us de-risk it and put us in a stronger position to go out and get money from the private sector. One of the concerns that the private sector has is its exposure to risk, but we can think about those financial vehicles.

We have—dare I say it—started some work on this at the World Economic Forum. I sit on the cities board now. One of the themes for this year is city finance. I said this at a C40 event. We need to come up with a new financial vehicle that can go on a journey of 10, 15 or 20 years with a city so that we are not on one or two-year horizons, which undermine our ability to plan. Unless we can plan, we are just going from one patch-



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and-mend approach to the next patch-and-mend approach. That is no way of running the country, is it?

Dave Doogan: No, indeed.

Chair: Marvin, I will allow you to escape to your cabinet meeting. Thank you very much for your very good evidence. There are two or three more questions left so you will have them in writing. If you would like to give us an answer in writing, we would be delighted. If there are any other thoughts you have after you have finished that you would like to put to us in writing as evidence, we would be delighted to have them. We will allow you to escape to your cabinet meeting. We appreciate your time.

Marvin Rees: We will send you some more notes. Thank you very much. Take care.

Chair: That is most welcome. Thank you very much.

Q213 **Dave Doogan:** Matthew, as I said to Marvin, I very much recognise and empathise with the challenges faced by local authorities. I have the scars on my back and they are still healing. On that issue of competing priorities, what successes have you enjoyed with getting buy-in from local communities and overcoming the seemingly natural resistance to the more ambitious changes to things like streetscapes and shared spaces? They promise so much, but people seem very resistant, not just shopkeepers or commercial property owners but local residents. Maybe you can touch again on the issue that Ian Byrne raised about to what extent people know how seriously damaging this situation is for their health.

Councillor Holmes: It is an interesting point. It has made me think about how we tackle this. Some of the emergency transport measures that we have put into place, like many other local authorities, are going to work and some are not. Some are going to be well received and some are not. Maybe in hindsight it is the communication as to why we are doing those things and what it is achieving. We know that we needed to make space emerging out of the first Covid-19 lockdown, and that was the primary reason in that case, but the communication needs to be there.

When we implement the clean air zone measures, which will be in the forthcoming weeks and months, people will see changes. Those who have taken notice of the consultation and the local comms in the press on this one will understand, but many will not. Many will not understand why we are changing the road system. It is about communicating that we are doing this because we want to deliver clean air to this area of the city.

Yes, you are absolutely right. The communication needs to be better as to why we are doing these things to bring people along with us. That is going to be a tough battle to win, but we must win it. I suppose you are absolutely right that that communication at times probably has not worked as well as it should.



Q214 **Dave Doogan:** You can make as clear a picture as you can in Derby, but is there a case for working collectively with local authorities right across the United Kingdom to say, "I know this is what we are telling you, but, far more importantly, this is what it looks like"? Try as you might, some people find it more challenging than others to visualise what is not manifestly in front of them. If we can have showcases and top-flight achievements from whatever local authority across the United Kingdom to say, "This is what it was before, this is what we did and here is what it looks like now. This is what was delivered and we can do this here", do you not think that that is a way to go?

Councillor Holmes: Definitely for Derby. We always struggle because, as I must have said several times this afternoon, Derby city has an incredibly compact footprint. Anything we do causes resistance. Even small change is going to cause resistance because of the impact it has, both positive and negative. We have to tell our own story as to why we are doing things specifically in our local infrastructure for Derby city in light of the funding we have and the priorities we adopt as a local authority. But, yes, there is definitely some merit in winning hearts and minds about why. Why is delivering clean air important? What are the health impacts? We need to have a very proactive and joined-up way of promoting that from Government and from local authorities, either regionally or nationally, whatever it takes to do that.

Yes, you are right. There is definitely some merit in spreading that message jointly and in a coherent way, not just locally. Some of it has to be city-specific, of course, but the principle of delivering clean air to the country is a sound one. That overarching message that we can tap into and support is probably something that is not currently cutting through.

Dave Doogan: Yes, because it validates your local ambition if you can demonstrate that this is not a Derby issue but an issue across the entirety of these islands. I cannot signpost Matthew to whatever regime there is in Wales or Northern Ireland, but if he has not already heard of Sustrans in Scotland, he may want to look them up. It does not have all the answers by any stretch of the imagination, but it has an interface between the Scottish Government and local authorities, and has achieved some very good things. I am very pleased to hear that co-operation is being embraced.

Q215 **Chair:** Earlier on, I talked about how much confidence people have in public transport at the moment. What are you doing in Derby to make sure they still have confidence and do not switch to their cars? Could the Government and Public Health England or transport providers do more to help? How can we reassure people to maintain their use of public transport if it is available?

Councillor Holmes: First, it is important to give the context that Derby has a fully deregulated commercial market. We have two major operators: Trent Barton and Arriva. It is an extensive network within the city and the wider region as well. To be frank, the Covid impact has been



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devastating on passenger numbers. I understand that they were down to single-digit percentages in terms of pre-Covid and during lockdown. Although they have increased, they are very low. In a way, it is to be expected because one of the guidelines from Government was to avoid public transport if possible, and that has a significant impact.

Since that initial impact, I believe the passenger numbers have increased to around 50% of what we would expect to be normal. I would have to check that figure, but I understand that that is around where we are at. Public funding is going to have to continue if our bus operators are to remain viable, certainly in the short and medium term during this health crisis. We must make sure that it does not impact new fleet technologies, nationally or locally. We need to support the bus companies as much as we can, which we are doing, or will be doing, with our transforming cities funding. The future is quite bright for Derby's investment and support of public transport. It is not just infrastructure, but we work very closely with those private operators to support them.

Q216 Chair: Could Public Health England do a bit more? What support are you getting as a council to support those companies providing the bus services? Their income must be, as you have said, vastly reduced.

Councillor Holmes: They are being supported financially through Government funding. I do not speak for them. You would have to ask them directly as to what the direct impacts are and what the level of funding is compared to their normal commercial income. I cannot answer that question unfortunately, but I know that they are getting significant support.

Like I say, that needs to continue because we cannot have a vast reduction of investment or routes in the medium or the long term from our bus operators. It is vital for every city and every area of the country to have a viable public transport system so that we can have that modal shift and have the option not to just use the car.

But it is difficult because, at the end of the day, we have to make sure that public transport is safe. I am delighted with the social distancing and Covid measures that our bus operators have put into place to keep everybody safe. I am confident in that respect, but it is going to be hard to get the public fully back on to public transport. Naturally, people are wary and the messages, as we head towards another lockdown, may impact on that too.

Q217 Chair: Is there anything more nationally that Public Health England can do or is it best done locally and best done by the local bus companies?

Councillor Holmes: My experience, certainly in our city, is that what can be done is being done to keep passengers safe and give them the confidence to actually use bus services. I do not have any concerns in that respect. We can have a dialogue with the bus companies to see, above and beyond the support they are currently receiving, both advice



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and financial support, whether they believe that it can be increased or improved in any way. We can certainly have those ongoing dialogues with them.

There is nothing specifically. I am satisfied, from what I have seen in Derby city, that everything is being done that can be done. I do not speak for them, but I would imagine that their main priority is to ensure that they are still viable as a business. Financial support will be their main priority, moving forward, to ensure that they can survive as a viable business.

Q218 Barry Gardiner: Matthew, everybody at the moment is using this phrase “build back better” as to how we move on from Covid. Earlier, Marvin talked about a just transition. How are you going to make sure that the economy is thriving and that it is not at the expense of increased emissions and air pollution? How are you integrating and dovetailing the need for clean air with a sound economy?

Councillor Holmes: I would refer back to something that I touched on. Very early on in the pandemic, we set about putting together a recovery taskforce. The council, our partners, business leaders and MPs were all working together on a recovery plan moving forward. Part of that is decarbonisation. It is a very important priority within that recovery plan.

I can give you a practical example of how we have ensured that these areas of policy are properly embedded in that recovery plan for Derby city. Around a year ago, as a council, we allocated £3 million of capital funding for action on climate change, which would include measures for clean air, decarbonisation and all of that. I have ensured that that funding is part of that recovery plan. We have another working partnership within the recovery partnership that talks about climate change, and it links into our recovery plan. Everything that we do on decarbonisation has to have that link to those particular areas of funding or priority policy. I am confident in Derby city that we have embedded decarbonisation, action on climate change and delivery of clean air within our recovery plans. I am confident that that is dealt with. It would be a vital part of this city’s recovery moving forward out of the impact of Covid-19.

Q219 Barry Gardiner: That is great. When you are talking about every aspect, you are including energy efficiency in housing, retrofits, insulation programmes, all of which goes around your housing programme and your retrofitting programme, as well as working with businesses on decarbonising their own emissions.

Councillor Holmes: That is exactly what it is about. It is about practical measures as well. The council cannot do this on its own, but it can lead and facilitate. That is what we are doing. It is about not just working with our partners to come along with us but putting our money where our mouth is. Where it is practical to do so, we are going to make those



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investments and already are, in all the things that you have just mentioned and much more.

Barry Gardiner: That is a good note, Chair, to end on. The comprehensive nature of a clean air strategy goes beyond transport into every aspect of the city's life, so that is really good.

Chair: Thank you, Matthew, very much. This has been a very good evidence session. It has been really interesting to hear your experiences in Derby and from Marvin in Bristol. Both of you have been excellent witnesses.

It is about how we make sure we work with Government and with you in the cities to deliver better air quality as we move forward into recovery. It is also about making sure that we have a green recovery that can deal with reducing air pollution while increasing economic activity. It is going to be a balance to be struck. We have talked a lot this afternoon about making sure that it is acceptable to the public when we change their way of life. It is not always easy to deliver. You have made that point very well. You both interviewed extremely well, and it will be great evidence to help us put our report together.

I thank you very much for your time. I thank you, Matthew, for hanging on and holding the fort singlehandedly at the end. We also appreciate that Marvin had his cabinet meeting to go to and we thank him in his absence. I will make sure I drop him a line as well. Thank you very much, members, for a very good session this afternoon. We are putting our inquiry very well together now. Thank you all very much.