



Environmental Audit Committee

Oral evidence: [Action on air quality](#) , HC 212

Wednesday 10 September 2014

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Written evidence from witnesses:

- [Mayor of London/Greater London Authority](#)
- [Sheffield City Council](#)

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Members present: Joan Walley (Chair), Martin Caton, Zac Goldsmith, Mike Kane, Caroline Lucas, Mrs Caroline Spelman, Dr Alan Whitehead, Simon Wright

Questions 100–180

Witnesses: **Boris Johnson**, Mayor of London, and **Matthew Pencharz**, Senior Advisor, Environment and Energy, Greater London Authority gave evidence.

Q100 Chair: I would like to commence our proceedings this afternoon by giving a very warm welcome to you, Boris, Mr Mayor, but you are obviously no stranger to this place.

Boris Johnson: Good afternoon.

Chair: You and your official are very welcome indeed. To start off with, I understand that you wish to make a very brief statement to the Committee.

Boris Johnson: Thank you very much, Ms Walley, and I will be very quick. It is just to say what we have done and what we are doing at the moment. Contrary to some of the things you may read, distinguished members of this Committee, London has seen considerable reductions in pollution over the last six years since I was elected as mayor: a 20% reduction in emissions of nitrogen dioxide, 15% reduction in the dust stuff, PM10, PM2.5, and a reduction of about half in the number of people living in areas of excess nitrogen dioxide. We are driving those key pollutants down and I will tell you quickly how we have done it.

We have done it by retrofitting 400,000 homes, by making sure that we have reduced the number of polluting vans. There has been a big reduction in the worst types of vans and cars, 150,000 fewer thanks to the low emission zone. We have a big programme now of hybrid buses on our streets, we have more hybrid buses coming, and we have instituted the first ever age limits for taxis, plus lots of programmes for cycling and walking. That is, broadly speaking, how it has been improved. I want to stress that we are not remotely

complacent and that we are now going forward with the most ambitious programme of air quality improvements anywhere in Europe, an ultra low emission zone that will cut the pollutants I have just talked about by about half and indeed cut CO₂ as well.

The final point I would like to make is that London, contrary to what you may have read in the papers, is by no means the worst polluted city in the world, let alone even in Europe. Mexico City has roughly double the problem that we do. Hong Kong, Istanbul, Shanghai, Beijing are all way ahead of us, or behind us if you like. In Europe you might look at Stuttgart, Paris, Rome, Milan that are much worse than us. Even a city like Munich has worse air pollution than London. So I welcome the opportunity to be here and to clear the air on that one.

Q101 Chair: That all sounds very well and good, and you started off by saying that there have been considerable reductions. One of the first questions that I want to ask is about the way that that is measured. Some people would say that the London atmospheric emissions means of measuring is not going to give you the same reading as you have presented to us as a statistic today. There is that issue about measurement, but I also think it is dangerous to get into the “how are we compared with other areas”. Even with the ultra low emission zone, we are talking about 2020 before Londoners can expect to have the clean air and the healthy atmosphere that is needed. I wanted to start this session, which I think is so important to us, by saying that members of this Committee wore the monitoring equipment and it may have been coincidence that it was nowhere near as polluted outside City Hall as it was in Oxford Street and other high areas of pollution.

Boris Johnson: Yes. You have got a lot of wind and riparian—

Chair: I think it is more than a lot of wind that would make pollution to that extent. The real issue for us is public awareness, this invisible problem, people not being aware of the extent of air pollution. Are you concerned about the results that we have had from our monitoring? I know that you have said it is not really something to worry about, it is all under control, but would you be willing to—

Boris Johnson: No, I wouldn't say that. I want to stress that we are by no means complacent. We calculate that there are 4,000 people, maybe more, who have premature mortality. We have 4,000 deaths a year as a result of bad air quality, so it is incredibly important. People care about it passionately. We have more and more people on bicycles, more and more people walking around; they want their air to be clean and it really does matter.

Chair: And they want action.

Boris Johnson: The only reason for mentioning the comparisons with other cities is that in the media there has been a little bit of stuff about how we have the worst quality in the world and I thought it would be a good opportunity to clear that up.

On the point that you began with about the validity of the statistics and how you calculate the reductions in pollution, I am fully aware of the criticism that is made of our data. All I can say is that is the way it is presented to me, that is the data we have, that is the information we have about the results of our policies, that they have led to this reduction in emissions. Yes, it is based on modelling but then so is my figure of 4,000 deaths or

whatever. A lot of the assumptions in this argument are based on models of one kind or another. I think Matthew is about to interrupt me to point out that the modelling is coherent with the roadside data that we pick up.

Matthew Pencharz: That is right. It is validated against real world measures from the monitoring stations around London and we have one of the most comprehensive networks of air monitoring stations in the world. It is a model but it is validated against the work from the monitoring stations so we think it is a pretty robust model from the LAQ monitoring.

Chair: I am going to bring in Caroline Lucas and then we will move on to some of the detailed aspects of this.

Q102 Caroline Lucas: On the coherence of the modelling versus the roadside testing, you were estimating in the written submission to our Committee that the emissions of oxides have been reduced by around 20% and yet the actual reading from King's College London's air quality network shows that London's roadside nitrogen dioxide has dropped by only 3%. If you are looking at the same time period and you have a differential between 3% and 20%, how can we be confident in the model?

Boris Johnson: With great respect to the data from King's, my understanding is that we have other data, not necessarily perhaps from the roadside monitoring stations they are talking about, that validates the 20% reduction.

Chair: Are you disputing the information from King's?

Boris Johnson: If I can just make a general point about London's air quality monitoring stations, we are punctilious to a fault in this city, as indeed Britain is generally in observing EU laws, in that we stick our sensors and our devices right by where the tailpipe of the most polluting vehicles would be expected to be found. I am very far from convinced that that is the technique adopted by every country in the EU.

Q103 Caroline Lucas: Why is there this disparity, though, because it is a huge one between 3% and 20%? It is a very big disparity.

Matthew Pencharz: Along Marylebone Road, which has the most historic series of data going back quite a long time, we have seen reductions in concentrations, real world measure concentrations. In 2009 it was 107 micrograms and last year it was 80.6 micrograms. We are seeing real world reductions and the stations I have held up have the longest history.

Q104 Caroline Lucas: I don't think anyone is disagreeing that there are real world reductions. People are disagreeing about whether or not there have been absolute reductions of you say 20%, King's say 3%. Which is it?

Boris Johnson: King's say 3% about some roadside monitoring stations, which may not be the same as the overall impact of the measures we have put in when calculated by the TfL database.

Q105 Caroline Lucas: Will you check that? It appears to me it is such a discrepancy to mean that it should be followed up.

Boris Johnson: Yes. We have been over it again and again and to the best of our knowledge, or the best of my knowledge, these statistics have never been seriously challenged. We are publishing today a study that has been peer reviewed by all sorts of people. You have it there, Matthew. I think this document, whose authority I am not able to question, backs up what we are saying. The point is that this modelling about the reductions is based on a series of assumptions about the cumulative impact of the measures that we have put in and also backed up by a lot of the monitoring stations themselves. It may be that there are some stations where you have particularly high concentrations along the Marylebone Road or Oxford Street but I don't think that invalidates our general confirmations.

Q106 Caroline Lucas: If I had to choose between assumptions based on your modelling or the empirical evidence coming out of the back of a tailpipe, I know which I would go with. Can you just say that you will go and speak to King's and find out why there was that discrepancy?

Boris Johnson: Yes. We are in constant contact with all academics in this field. These are areas where to a great extent I think they would all accept you have to rely on modelling and you cannot just form a judgment about air quality in London simply by sticking your face as close possible to the tailpipe of a double-decker on Oxford Street.

Chair: We have some detailed questions. I know that you have to leave at 3.00 pm. Is that still the timetable?

Boris Johnson: That is what I understood the Committee wished me to do and therefore I have made arrangements to do other things.

Q107 Mrs Spelman: You mentioned a number of European cities that have even worse air quality. The context is we know that only one member state in the whole of the European Union at the moment is compliant with the European air quality directive and that is Malta. We are being fined for non-compliance. In your written submission you refer to ultra low emission zones as the way to make big progress on nitrogen dioxide, taking us to two thirds of the target by 2020. How are we going to fill the rest of the gap by 2020 and, for example, how much would a diesel scrappage scheme really cost?

Boris Johnson: You are quite right that we are being very ambitious, Caroline, with what we are trying to do with the ultra low emission zone, the ULEZ, which sounds like one of those miracle skin oils—oil of ULEZ is what we are bringing in. It is going to be absolutely fantastic and it will mean that you can't get into the central zone of London unless you have a petrol vehicle that is Euro 4 compliant and a diesel vehicle that is Euro 6 compliant. All new taxis will have to be zero emission capable; all buses will have to be either hybrid or electric. As I said at the very beginning, we think this will lead to massive reductions in the two pollutants that we are really concerned about, nitrogen dioxide and the dust stuff, the PM10s and PM2.5s. Other European cities have problems of their own.

The only way to get to full compliance with the EU directive that you talk about, Caroline, is that we will need more financial support. There is a bigger pot of money floating around now. There are great things we could do with low carbon vehicles, with stimulating the market for low carbon vehicles. I know that is something that Oliver Letwin is absolutely

passionate about and I think he is right. You could do a diesel scrappage scheme that would stimulate the market for cleaner vehicles and—

Q108 Mrs Spelman: Do you have an idea of the cost of that?

Boris Johnson: Yes, I do. What we are saying is that it should be between £1,000 and £2,000 for people who have been seduced into buying a diesel vehicle, and I feel very sorry for them. I think everybody should be clear that this has been a massive failure of public policy. Millions of people were told that they were doing the right thing and the clean thing and the environmental friendly thing by buying a diesel vehicle and they now feel very hacked off that suddenly they are told that their vehicles are polluting. That is exactly what a taxi driver who just overtook me on Victoria Embankment had to say to me, and he was quite right. They deserve support, but you could use a diesel scrappage scheme, which would probably cost £300 million all in, to stimulate the market as the 2009 scheme did as well.

Q109 Mrs Spelman: Your confidence about reaching those targets by 2020 appears not to be matched by DEFRA itself, which believes that we will take until 2030 to meet these compliance targets. What has the European Commission said to your assumptions?

Boris Johnson: The DEFRA assumptions, to the best of my knowledge, don't take account of the ULEZ—that is right, isn't it, Matthew—and it should do, because the ULEZ, we think, will have a terrific effect, so we would like DEFRA to put that into their modelling.

Q110 Mrs Spelman: London has some particular advantages and disadvantages in dealing with air pollution, and you have championed low emission zones as your way of tackling it. How difficult is it to co-ordinate and control planning, buses, roads and how easy do you find it to get the support of the Department for Transport for your approach to this air quality problem?

Boris Johnson: I think it is something that all Departments really understand. I think people across Whitehall now understand that this is an issue that people really care about. It is difficult because when you go for something like the LEZ or taxi age limits, you are asking people, who have made a massive investment in something that is often very important for their own earnings, to take a big hit unless you manage it very carefully. With something like the third phase of the low emission zone, we had to be very careful about how we phased that in because it came just at the moment when the economy had started to tank. You would have been hitting loads and loads of people on low incomes who needed to use their vans to get around and it would not have been the right thing to do for the economy then. As things pick up and you are starting to see more congestion, more pollution on London's roads, now is the moment to go for it.

Q111 Caroline Lucas: You have been singing the praises of the ULEZ and the terrific impact it will make. That being the case, why is it going to take until 2020 to put it into place? What would be the implications if you tried to go for, say, a 2017 or 2018 start?

Boris Johnson: Some things will start in 2018, like the taxi stipulation. We will say from 2018—this is quite a tough thing to state—that new taxis must be zero emission capable in the central zone. The technology for that is only just coming on the market so that is a very

ambitious and aggressive way of doing it. I know people do want it to go faster. The reason for not going any faster is simply the one I gave to Caroline Spelman: you have to be fair to the punters; you have to be fair to people who are buying vehicles now. They will feel very aggrieved if suddenly they are told that a car on which they spent a huge sum of money is not going to be compliant and they will face an extra charge of £10 or £12 or whatever to go through the centre of London. You have to be reasonable to ordinary people, to people who need their cars, and you need also to take account of where the industry is and the state of technology.

Q112 Caroline Lucas: You explained that the taxi will come in 2018. Are there any other quick wins between now and 2020 that you would put in place?

Boris Johnson: This is a cumulative thing. There is no magic bullet. There are all sorts of different strategies you have to put into place. I suppose I would cite the buses. I think what has happened to London's buses is wonderful. We have the cleanest, greenest buses in the world now.

Q113 Chair: In terms of your retrofitting of buses, there has been some change or delay to that programme from the original intentions, hasn't there?

Boris Johnson: Not that I know of, Ms Walley. As far as I know, there will be 1,700 hybrid buses by 2016, including 600 of the new bus, which is the cleanest, greenest bus in the world, and all buses in central London will be hybrid by 2020. From memory, we have retrofitted about 900 already.

Matthew Pencharz: We completed the programme about a month ago and we retrofitted 1,000 buses and we also retired faster than we would otherwise have done 900—

Q114 Chair: Was that programme for the retrofitting of the buses delayed? That was really my question.

Matthew Pencharz: I don't believe so. They are shaking their heads behind me.

Boris Johnson: I don't think it was. I make these great promises and claims about the ULEZ. It depends, I am afraid, on the efficacy of those Euro 6 standards. Those Euro 6 standards that the Commission is now bringing in for diesel really have to work this time. It can't go wrong like last time, so there is no doubt that we all across Europe are banking very heavily on that.

Matthew Pencharz: In answer to your question about something else being a quick win, as you called it, we consulted and we laid down the rules for construction equipment, and I know you have discussed that in an earlier session. Construction equipment, NRMM as it is called, is going to be subject to regulation from 2015 and then tightening further in 2020 in line with the ULEZ. NRMM is responsible for quite a surprisingly large degree of emissions and these regulations will abate that by 40%. We think that is quite a big win and there has not been anywhere in the world where we have seen a regulation for both PM and NO₂.

Boris Johnson: To go back to a point that Caroline Lucas made about the disparity between the reductions being picked up in Oxford Street, say, and our global figures for what we think we are achieving, it is a great thing to have achieved any kind of reduction

at all, given the huge increase in traffic, in usage. *[Interruption.]* The BBC are thoroughly endorsing it. With respect, it shows that the measures are biting on whichever reading or measurements you take.

Q115 Chair: Can I just come back to that point? You were talking about the efficacy of the figures and the results that we got from our air pollution monitoring, which was used on “Costing the Earth”.

Boris Johnson: Was that what it was? I see.

Chair: Would you accept the challenge that we accepted to be wired up and to go round monitoring? Statistics are all very well and good but if members of the public are being exposed regularly to that degree of pollution, carcinogenic risks, are you prepared to take on the challenge?

Boris Johnson: I noticed that you have done some excellent work and I congratulate the Committee on the observations that you personally took. I am not sure that I necessarily need to try to improve on your role, particularly since as far as I could make out the most alarming data you found were picked up on the back of taxis. Is that right? Since I am usually on my bike, I probably would not match the figures, the readings that you achieved

Chair: So that is a no?

Boris Johnson: I think it is probably unnecessary for me to try to gild the lily of your achievements.

Chair: I will take that as a no.

Q116 Caroline Lucas: I was going to ask you why the greater London boroughs are excluded from the ULEZ?

Boris Johnson: Why are the greater London boroughs, the outer London boroughs excluded? There is a discussion going on now about who wants to be in. Some boroughs, as you can imagine, are saying, “Bags us be in the ULEZ right from the get go”. There is a conversation going on about that at the moment.

Q117 Caroline Lucas: The current low emission zone has been criticised for having too many exemptions and comparisons have been made with—

Boris Johnson: It has also been criticised for having not enough exemptions.

Caroline Lucas: The ones I am looking at are criticising you for too many exemptions compared with the German model, for example, which bans outright all diesel vehicles. The question is: how do you respond to such criticism?

Boris Johnson: Just with the same sort of answer that I gave to both you and Caroline Spelman, that you have to be sensitive to hard cases. Every London MP or every MP in the periphery of London will have had an absolutely huge postbag when the LEZ came in about people with horseboxes, people who were driving vans that are absolutely essential for charity work, ambulances for older people, that were suddenly deemed to be non-compliant. We had to be very tough, and we were, and I still get letters about it, but you

have to advance. You have to take the public with you but you cannot go too far ahead of what people can tolerate and what their finances can bear.

Matthew Pencharz: I think it is also worth mentioning that our LEZ covers almost all of Greater London whereas many of these German LEZs are really quite small. Our impact has been quite profound because almost all the vehicles driving into greater London have been caught up in the LEZ.

Boris Johnson: It has led to a substantial reduction in emissions in London, according to our models.

Q118 Caroline Lucas: Quite. My very last question was about the submission to us claims that the ULEZ will reduce emissions of nitrogen dioxides by 96%, PM10 by 51% and so on. What are the assumptions that inform those estimates and do they take into account things like population growth?

Boris Johnson: They do and that is one of the reasons I am so confident that we can go ahead and keep beating this problem. We are doing this against a background of a resurgent economy and a massively growing London population. The population of London has grown by about 600,000 or 700,000 since I have been mayor. It is obviously nothing to do with me but there you go, it is extraordinary. We have reduced CO₂ by about 20%, an unbelievable feat, and that is obviously a lot to do with cleaner vehicles but also retrofitting homes as well.

Q119 Chair: On the issue of reducing CO₂, isn't at the heart of this whole debate how you can reduce the CO₂ and at the same time not have the unintended consequences of environmental pollution?

Boris Johnson: That was why we rushed to diesel and so the objective, plainly, now has to be to achieve both at the same time.

Matthew Pencharz: In fact, we have modelled that ULEZ will reduce CO₂ by 13% in the central zone from transport emissions.

Q120 Martin Caton: The London Plan and your supplementary planning guidance require developments to be air quality neutral. How do you define this and does it take into account the additional traffic that generally follows new development?

Boris Johnson: Yes, it does in the sense that all the developments that we support, all the developments for which we give approval and that we ask councils to approve, must be developments that will not add to air pollution. That means that above all they have to be properly insulated and they have to have decent boilers. A vast amount of the nitrogen dioxide is caused by faulty boilers in inadequate central heating systems, particularly in older buildings. That is why the retrofitting is so important and the London Plan is there to provide a framework for new building to crack down on that.

Matthew Pencharz: Also on the traffic movements, we have quite tight parking rules on the number of car parking spaces per development. There are even some central London developments that have zero parking spaces and as you go further out the rules become looser, again to ensure that these new developments are air quality neutral.

Q121 Martin Caton: We have received some evidence to this inquiry suggesting that developers are just paying lip service to this requirement and not really taking it seriously. Have you made any assessment of how it is working in practice?

Boris Johnson: I am very interested in what you have to say and we will look at the testimony that you have received on that. All developers have to comply with the building standards and regulations, the BREEAM standards, the windows and doors regulations and so on, that operate in the city. They will be under very strict obligations to get it right.

Q122 Chair: Spatial planning does not actually apply to the building regulations, does it?

Boris Johnson: These are general stipulations about the kinds of buildings that we want to see in London. We certainly do have all kinds of stipulations about being carbon neutral or whatever.

Q123 Chair: Sorry to cut across this, Martin. The point that I am making is that, for example, if there was going to be a new school that was right next to a busy road, the BREEAM regulations are not really going to affect whether or not that is the right location. It is about spatial planning as well as the detail of building design, and how is that reflected?

Matthew Pencharz: There was an example recently of a development that was turned down, I think in Greenwich, because it was thought to be too close to the feeder roads into the Blackwall Tunnel and the air quality impacts that has. So we do have examples of the planning system where, because of air quality rules, that development had to be rethought or reshaped in order to shield the population. We will have to check and get back to you, but I think that was a school or a sixth form college or something like that along that road.

Q124 Martin Caton: How do you enforce your air quality neutral requirement, or who enforces it?

Boris Johnson: That is up to the boroughs insofar as they give planning permission for the schemes or when the schemes are referred to us we will make sure that they comply or that the plan, to the best of our understanding, complies with our standards.

Q125 Martin Caton: Are the air quality mitigations offered by developers effective? Again, we have had some evidence that developers are going for cheap options like putting a bike shed behind a development and calling that the green mitigation measure, when it has very limited effect.

Boris Johnson: Developers have to build homes, or any structures whatever, that are compliant with our general objectives in London to improve air quality and reduce pollution. It may be also, as part of the project, that we will ask them for more bike space or bike stands or whatever. That seems a reasonable thing to do. I am not aware of any incident where a developer has been able to get round their obligations on air quality by building a bike stand. We ask for loads of bike stands to be built irrespective of that.

Q126 Martin Caton: How do you intend to apply the air quality neutral criteria to the further development of the road network outlined in your London infrastructure plan consultation? Do you think road schemes might be blocked because of their likely air pollution impacts? From what you have said, Mr Pencharz, that has already happened.

Matthew Pencharz: That was a great example because it was on the feeder road into the Blackwall Tunnel, which is pretty much the south of England's worst pinch-point. I think that the proposals for a Silvertown link will relieve congestion. You hear every day on the radio how it is backed up over the Woolwich Road flyover. It is that stop-start constant traffic that is causing the air quality issue in that part of the Royal Borough of Greenwich and you can see that as soon as you smooth the traffic flow in that area it is going to reduce the amount of emissions because you won't have that stop-start traffic.

Q127 Martin Caton: We have received evidence, as you can imagine, that does not go along with your prediction of what is going to happen to traffic.

Boris Johnson: There has been a substantial reduction in the use of cars in central London but there are still lots of pinch-points, and Matthew accurately described one of the worst, where cars are belching out fumes. If you can get the traffic flowing more smoothly then you will improve the air quality, so we are pursuing that.

Q128 Martin Caton: You do envisage road schemes potentially being blocked because of their likely impact on air quality, without talking about a particular example?

Boris Johnson: No. What I said was you might want to go ahead with road schemes in order to alleviate.

Q129 Martin Caton: But if there was substantial evidence that the impact was going to be in the opposite direction, would that justify preventing the road scheme going ahead?

Boris Johnson: I am not aware of any such evidence and in my view it is very unlikely to be a reason for blocking a road development. What we want to do is improve the quality of the technology so that the emissions are radically reduced, and we have all sorts of plans to do that. That is the best way forward. I am not of the general party that thinks we should stop all road building as a way of reducing pollution. That seems to me to be a false assumption.

Q130 Simon Wright: A few questions about buses and taxis. How soon do you expect to achieve your aim of all buses in central London becoming hybrid or zero emission and how do you plan to get to that point?

Boris Johnson: 2020, and we will get to it by rapidly expanding the hybrid fleet. We already have 1,700 hybrid buses and we will have 600 of the new bus for London. We will be going forward with electric single-deckers. Electric single-deckers are looking very good. I am told now that you can even get electric double-deckers and that would be truly wonderful. We have always thought that an electric double-decker was impossible because of the weight of the battery but the technology is now there. Wonderful. You would not have to worry about the roads at all. You would have lots of lovely electric double-deckers and then you could relax.

Q131 Simon Wright: There are obviously implications for heavy buses in terms of non-exhaust emissions, whether it is tyre wear, brake wear, road surface wear, and I understand that the new Routemasters are particularly heavy buses. What work are you doing to explore that issue?

Boris Johnson: That is an extremely good point. A lot of the road dust is not just coming out of the back of the exhaust. It is stuff that is churned up from the ground-up old copies of the *Evening Standard* or whatever it is that happens to be lying around on the road and, as you rightly say, tyres. We are looking at all sorts of things to try to mitigate that, tyre composition and all the rest of it. It is not a massive factor but it is certainly in the mix.

Q132 Simon Wright: Do you have a timetable work plan for that?

Boris Johnson: I am sure we do but I am afraid I can't give it to you now.

Matthew Pencharz: We see in the European Commission where they have regulatory powers over brake and tyre wear and, as part of addressing air quality, we need all the bits of government, including the Commission, to pull in the same direction. When it comes to that kind of regulation we have been calling on the Commission to address brake and tyre wear, which is a part of the PM emissions.

Q133 Chair: Just before we move on to diesel taxes, am I right in thinking that there was a proposal put forward by the Labour group in County Hall that would have been a £25 million budget to retrofit buses by 2015 up to the Euro 6 standards and that it was rejected? Could you explain why that was not seen as an acceptable way forward?

Boris Johnson: I am afraid I can't give you any details about that. I am not aware of it.

Chair: You are not aware of any costed proposals that could have got us to 2015—

Boris Johnson: I am not denying that there may have been such a suggestion. It was not taken up by us or by TfL, I am certain for reasons of practicality. It would have been something that didn't really add to what we are already doing. There is a huge drive at the moment to make our bus fleet as clean and green and as innocent and innocuous as possible. Whatever proposal you are describing would not have made any difference to the timetable that we already had, I think is probably the answer.

Q134 Chair: There is a difference, isn't there, between 2015 and 2020 in terms of the extra deaths that there would be as a result of lack of action?

Boris Johnson: I would have to study the proposal and the implications that are contained in it, but I would be very happy to write to you with an assessment of that.

Chair: When you have, we would be very happy to have that.

Q135 Simon Wright: Moving to taxis, what has happened to the proposed financial incentive scheme for low emission taxis that was first proposed in 2008 and then more recently in 2010 and 2011?

Boris Johnson: As we get to the point in 2018 when we are asking taxis to make the switch or new taxis registering for hire in London to make the switch to zero emissions, we will inevitably have to bung some money into the system, and that will—

Chair: What was the word you used? Did you say bun?

Boris Johnson: Put some money. We will have to invest. I am sorry, I will phrase it more elegantly. We will have to lash out; we will have to stump up; the taxpayer will be called

upon to support the taxi trade that we all love and believe in. This is the key thing. None of these steps is easy and they all involve dealing with people's lives in a very intimate way. It is their car, the thing they need, they have invested in, and you are telling them there is something wrong with it, you are asking them to trade it in; you have to be as helpful as you possibly can.

Q136 Simon Wright: That 2018 date, as you say, applies to new vehicles. At the current rate of replacement of taxis within London, how soon would you expect all cabs to meet that zero emission standard?

Boris Johnson: I can't give you the figure. There is a natural turnover. You would have had a two-year run-up by 2020 and you would start to have quite a difference because there is a big churn in taxis.

Q137 Simon Wright: Has someone in your office done that calculation?

Boris Johnson: I am certain that somebody has. Don't forget that we brought in the first age limits for taxis. There is meant to be a protest against me even now as I speak outside in Parliament Square, that is probably going on, because for some taxi drivers that was very tough. We said, "Your vehicle can't be more than 15 years old" and that was a real shocker for some people. We have had to manage it and we have had to explain it and when it comes to this big change that we are going to ask for we will certainly have to help.

Q138 Dr Whitehead: On electric vehicles themselves, the vehicles that we all love, we did have an electric vehicle delivery plan in 2009 that had targets of 25,000 charging points by 2015, 100,000 electric vehicles on the road. That targets have not just been missed but laughably so, haven't they?

Boris Johnson: Yes, absolutely. We still have more electric vehicles in London than any other European city, we still have a big electric even a growing electric—there are plenty of charging points around the city, as you will have seen.

Dr Whitehead: Well, 1,400, aren't there?

Boris Johnson: 1,400 is not to be sneezed at.

Dr Whitehead: But not quite 25,000.

Boris Johnson: That is charging points not cars?

Dr Whitehead: Charging points, yes. You had a target of 25,000 charging points.

Boris Johnson: The reality is that the market has not developed in the way that we had hoped. I am afraid that electric vehicles are still seen by people as being luxury items. They are still priced pretty uncompetitively. I think it is a great shame they are not thought of by people as being reliable. People have what is called range anxiety. Like status anxiety, there is anxiety that you will conk out as a result of your battery running out. So they don't go for electrical vehicles for all sorts of reasons, which I think is a great shame. If I may say, I also think the motor manufacturers should have been much more imaginative and adventurous. Six years ago I said I wanted to trade in my 20 year-old Toyota Previa, which will probably be totally banned in the ultra low emission zone by the

way, for an electric vehicle, so you could have an electric people carrier, and the market still does not have an electric people carrier, which is a real shame. There is not a single one.

Dr Whitehead: A Peugeot 3008, I think.

Boris Johnson: I don't think that does the job. In any event, it is incredibly expensive.

Q139 Dr Whitehead: It's true that the Government gives an underwriting. Of the electric charging points, you mentioned people conking out driving around central London.

Boris Johnson: I think that is an anxiety people have, which I think is misplaced.

Dr Whitehead: How many of the 1,400 charging points are fast charging?

Boris Johnson: I couldn't tell you. I will be happy to write to you.

Matthew Pencharz: We have got 130 fast chargers.

Q140 Dr Whitehead: So you have 1,400 charging points, 130 of which are fast charging. That is not really very—

Matthew Pencharz: It is a chicken and egg discussion. We and the Mayor get a lot of criticism for the fact that they are not used very much. It seems we can't win. Some people say, fairly, we should have lots and lots of them. Some people say, fairly, we have a few but they are not being used. We are pump priming the system. We have 1,300 of them, which will be increasingly used. It is now being taken over by the IER, who are going to bring in their autolead from France, and we hope that will normalise the electric vehicle experience so that it gets used more.

Also, having heard the criticism of the motor manufacturers for not bringing forth products fairly that people want to drive, I think we have now reached tipping point. BMW with their I3 and now I8 are building cars that people want to drive—I am not talking about the early adopters but normal people would like to drive—and I hope there will be a car for them before 2020.

Boris Johnson: I am still driving my Toyota and it is about to expire. I think what Matthew is saying is right. There is no market in a big city anywhere in Europe that has successfully made the leap to electric in the way that I wanted to see six years ago. We are getting there; it is just taking longer.

Q141 Dr Whitehead: Electric vehicle sharing in Paris?

Boris Johnson: That is a scheme, as Matthew said, that we have trialled in Paris and we are going to put it into effect in London.

Q142 Dr Whitehead: You are confident that the targets that you set out in 2009 will shortly be reached?

Boris Johnson: I wouldn't want to go as far as that. An emotional, psychological tipping point in favour of electric vehicles does depend on loads of vehicles coming on the market that are actually good value, and that is what we need. When that happens the whole thing

will take off. You can go to the Science Museum and you will see a taxi that was made in 1895 that ran on batteries. People having been trying this for a very long time is the point I am trying to make.

Q143 Chair: I just wonder how many electric charging points there are in Uxbridge?

Boris Johnson: As you will appreciate, I am mayor of the entire city and my job is to increase take-up of green vehicles everywhere.

Dr Whitehead: You might get range anxiety from the centre to—

Chair: So you don't know how many there are in Uxbridge? You haven't researched that?

Boris Johnson: My job is to increase take-up impartially across the city.

Q144 Chair: There is an issue, isn't there, in terms of where your actions are going to be focused? Are they going to be focused on solving this issue of air quality or are they going to be focused in Uxbridge, or are you going to do both?

Boris Johnson: I don't think there will be any such issue. You will find that we go on with the most ambitious project for improving air quality that any city in Europe currently can boast and I think the results that you have seen already are very good. I accept that there is an argument to be had about how you measure the achievements that you are seeing but I think most people would say, in fact a lot of people are saying to me, that this is a very aggressive and very ambitious programme. It is the right thing to do and we will pursue it.

Q145 Dr Whitehead: Just a final point, although I hope a kind one. The 2009 proposals, as I say, have been almost completely missed, almost as bad as the Green Deal really. So you have now new aggressive targets. What sort of confidence—

Boris Johnson: I think just this, that when you look at what is already happening in London and you look at the reductions that we have achieved and are achieving in pollution and you look at the improvements that we are already making, I think you can have every possible confidence that City Hall will continue to lead in London, and I would venture to say throughout the UK, in trying to improve air quality. I think London has a great story to tell

Chair: We have two more very quick questions, if that is okay.

Boris Johnson: Certainly.

Q146 Mike Kane: Mayor, solving London's poor air quality was one of the biggest policy challenges facing the city—I quote you—when you assumed office. Is that still the case?

Boris Johnson: Yes, it is and, Mr Kane, I think it has become even more important. Paradoxically, even though air quality has got better, it has risen up people's agenda. People want to see better air. As I said, they are cycling more, they feel it more, and big cities are going to compete on things like air quality. One of the reasons I don't want a third runway at Heathrow, by the way, is that it would lead to a savage reduction in air quality in that part of the city, huge vehicular congestion, to say nothing of the aviation fuel.

Q147 Mike Kane: Your advice to the next mayor?

Boris Johnson: My advice to the next mayor is take the tough decisions early, take the heat, and it will all pay off.

Q148 Mike Kane: In politics it is important to walk the walk. You certainly cycle the cycle, as I do around my home town of Manchester. What surprised me about our air quality monitoring experiment was the fact that cyclists and pedestrians were sucking a lot less of this rubbish into their lungs than those in private cars.

Boris Johnson: I find that very interesting, I have to say. I thought it was a very good report.

Q149 Mike Kane: It is interesting. I have championed cyclists and pedestrians in my city. So it is the canalisation effect that you particularly have here in London and back to the particular point of is it time to pedestrianise Whitehall and Oxford Street?

Boris Johnson: There are other issues there. Something funny happens to streets when you pedestrianise them. They can become rather soulless and there is something about the effect of cars that can keep them lively.

Chair: And polluting.

Boris Johnson: Well, not just polluting. As we have been saying, the objective is to move to much cleaner vehicles. One thing that I found interesting about your study also was the level of dust pollution on the Tube, and I know that you were very concerned about that, but that is a very different matter from air quality on the street.

Q150 Mike Kane: Good. I see that the magnificent Barry Gardiner MP has entered the room and he has released a report today saying, I think it is through London Labour so forgive me, that the Healthy Air campaign, which is sponsored by the Heart Foundation and Asthma UK—that the Government are currently masking the scale of the problem in UK British cities. Do you agree with that or do you have a thought on that?

Boris Johnson: I don't think the Government are remotely masking the problem. I think the Government are absolutely determined to crack the problem. I think the Government understand at all levels, in the Department for Transport, at Environment and DEFRA, that this is something that people want solved. What I think is so exciting is that this is an area where technology really can help, so you don't just have to go for the hair-shirt, stop all growth approach. You can use much cleaner vehicles and encourage walking and cycling as well.

Q151 Mike Kane: The Committee is happy, free of charge, to fit you with a GPS machine and an air quality valve.

Boris Johnson: You want to know where I am at all times. Nobody needs to know that, believe me.

Mike Kane: We want to know how much time you spend in Uxbridge.

Q152 Zac Goldsmith: I want to take you back to Heathrow, briefly. The last Government's proposed runway would have led to 25 million extra road passenger journeys, and that was

one runway and it was sub-length, so it was not a complete runway. I know you are opposed to a third runway, as I am, but do you think it is practically possible to reconcile a third, and what would eventually undoubtedly become a fourth, runway with the air quality standards you expect and hope for for London?

Boris Johnson: It would be a nightmare for us to try to achieve the improvements in west London that we want to see with that kind of expansion at Heathrow. It simply would not be possible. We would probably have to look at a special ultra low emission zone around Heathrow or a congestion charge zone around Heathrow to try to tackle the problem and to meet our obligations under EU law. How would the taxi drivers react to that? That would not be popular.

Zac Goldsmith: Or the passengers.

Boris Johnson: Or the passengers.

Chair: I know you do have to go. Thank you for coming and giving evidence.

Examination of Witness

Witness: **Councillor Jack Scott**, Sheffield City Council, gave evidence.

Q153 Chair: Councillor Scott, I think you sat through the previous session that we have just had. Can I open my remarks by saying it is equally as important to our Committee that as well as the issue of air quality in London, we look at and take account of the issue of air quality in all cities and all parts of the United Kingdom. Thank you very much indeed for coming and giving evidence today. I don't know whether or not you wish to make a quick two-minute initial presentation. I think that might be helpful, given that the Mayor of London had that opportunity too.

Councillor Scott: Thanks very much for inviting me today. I hope you got a sense from our submission of the scale of ambition within Sheffield. As you would expect, there are a number of points of departure that we have in Sheffield from what the mayor said but actually a number of points of agreement as well. It does strike me that having a regional government role makes it a lot easier to take very big decisions around air quality, and that is obviously something that we don't have in quite the same way within local authorities, but it does also seem to me that there is a key issue, which I hope we can get into today, around public engagement. I don't get the sense that this is something that is at the very top of the public's imagination and thinking, which is unfortunate. I am particularly keen to talk about other mechanisms that might lead to increased public engagement and awareness because it seems that people are pretty shocked when they hear about the scale of air quality problems that we have within the country, and the tests that the Committee undertook gave an example of the eye-opening nature of some of this work.

I suppose for me the key message around public engagement is really important and it would be fantastic if we could have a conversation about that but, more broadly as well, I don't feel that technology alone will get us out of this issue. Certainly when we look at the fleet composition of our vehicles in Sheffield, we know that even if we were to have a low emission zone that would not take care of our air quality problem. It wouldn't even bring

us into compliance with EU regulations, so I think there is an unfortunate instinct sometimes to reach for a technological solution when we need to look at some harder choices at the same time.

Q154 Chair: Thank you. It is interesting that you flag up the issue of public engagement. As I am sure you are aware, that was the conclusion of the earlier report that we did into air quality. I think this is part of the issue as to how to get the public on our side about how we deal with the extent of air pollution.

Can I start off by looking at a little bit more detail? There is this issue, isn't there, between central Government and local government and the most recent intervention by the Government to suggest that fines for non-compliance and so on get transferred over to local councils? Could you help us to understand where the balance of responsibility between local government and central government on air pollution actually lies? It is very difficult to see how we can get a real improvement without a whole raft of measures at one and the same time. How does that affect you trying to deal with this in Sheffield?

Councillor Scott: A few examples immediately spring to mind. First of all, we know in Sheffield that one of our hotspots is along the M1 corridor where we have houses very close to what is an extremely busy motorway and we find it a source of frustration that we have almost no control over that M1 corridor. I think there is an issue for all local authorities about how they work with air quality issues that arise from Highways Agency managed land. That is the first point I want to make.

Secondly, it is fair to say that there is not always clarity from Government about the extent to which the Department for Transport and DEFRA are responsible for air quality measures or air quality actions. It seems to me there is a split between the responsibility and perhaps some of the tools that are at the Government's disposal. The responsibility seems to lie with DEFRA for improving air quality but the tools for tackling that, which relate to transport, seem to lie with the Department for Transport. That gives something of a confusing picture to those of us in local authorities who are trying to find a way forward. Counting up a few days ago in preparation for today, I think there are 30 funding sources that have been available to local authorities over the last two years. There is perhaps not a clear message from key Government departments.

The other thing I would move on to is particular issues around taxis. The Taxi Licensing White Paper, which I understand is due to come forward quite soon, in our view absolutely must address issues on air quality. We know that in Sheffield taxis account for about 5% of our vehicles but 10% of our NO_x emissions. There is a huge issue for local authorities with taxis and we hope that that White Paper will give us some of the tools that currently we don't have for emissions standards, age of vehicles and perhaps green taxi ranks and some of those other issues as well. There are a number of other things that go alongside that about our relationship with Government, but those are the top three that I would pick out.

Q155 Chair: You have highlighted there are improvements that can come from other Government Departments, and I should just mention taxes and so on, but do you think that local authorities need any additional powers other than what they already have at the moment, or do you think that the things that need sorting are ones that can only be done by

central Government and by funding that will assist you in meeting the air quality objectives that you have?

Councillor Scott: I have not particularly encountered a lack of power as being a problem. I think there is a lack of co-ordination between local authorities sometimes, and indeed between the local bodies at a local level, for example passenger transport executives and indeed local enterprise partnerships, so there is perhaps a slight issue there. There has not been an awful lot of things that we desperately wanted to do that we do not have the power to do, other than perhaps firmer powers around buses. In an almost entirely deregulated market, which we have in local government outside of London, we know there is a huge issue around air quality for us arising from our bus fleet, and it is very difficult to enforce any improvement there without being told by bus companies to bear almost all of the cost for that.

Q156 Chair: I think in the evidence that we had in the previous session, it is much easier to be able to deal with fleets of buses if you have the responsibility for buses, and obviously outside of London that is not the case. How highly on a scale of one to 10 would you rate the regulation or the reregulation of buses to deal with this issue about investment in the bus fleet?

Councillor Scott: Probably about eight, I would have thought. It is a key priority for us. I think the reason it is not a 10 is because even if you were able to do it without the financial resources available to incentivise some of those retrofits, it would only get us so far. It would be an improvement and much better, but I would not want the Committee to think it would take care of the whole problem automatically.

Q157 Chair: Are there any other disadvantages that places outside of London have compared with London when trying to have this sort of integrated approach?

Councillor Scott: Yes, a few things struck me. One was around the split that there is sometimes when Government announces funding rounds for local authorities to bid to for air quality or whatever.

Q158 Chair: This is the Sustainable Transport Fund?

Councillor Scott: That is an example, but many others like it. I think there were, as I say, 25 to 30 in the last few years. Very often those will be capital. The requests may need some revenue, or indeed the other way around, and it does not feel like very often there is a conversation with Government before the criteria for any funding are announced. It seems, bluntly, like there has been an underspend towards the end of the year sometimes and it needs to be spent in quite short order. That is not particularly helpful and maybe does not make us put forward the best thought through plans. I think beyond that, it does not seem to me that local authorities have an awful lot of oversight of railway pollution from trains either, so that is perhaps also something, that local authorities could have a duty to oversee all transport in their area or the emissions of all transport within their area, rather than the current system that does not seem to imply any responsibility or duty at all.

Q159 Dr Whitehead: The financial support you have obtained from Government so far you mentioned was a little bit unco-ordinated, but how effective would you say that has been as far as your authority is concerned?

Councillor Scott: It has been tremendously welcome. I think we would always say this, but it would be nice to have an awful lot more of it, but we have, for example, refitted 40 hybrid buses that are fantastic and are very visible. That was important to us. I think part of the problem in other authorities is where funds have been secured to retrofit buses that look very similar to other buses, so we have taken the opportunity to make clear that that is a success for our city and we are contributing to a cleaner area. We have been informed quite recently about the Clean Vehicle Technology Fund, which we have been successful for as well, so that will help tremendously in a key hotspot for us. That is very welcome.

As I said though, it would be particularly helpful if Government would talk with local authorities before those criteria are announced in a big way, and particularly the Office for Low Emission Vehicles, which is shortly to make a significant investment in local authorities. It is quite difficult sometimes to have a really joined-up conversation across lots of big cities about the sort of priorities that we have.

Q160 Dr Whitehead: In this, the further difference you would say would be joined up, getting inside the loop as early as possible rather than just funding in its own right?

Councillor Scott: Yes, I think so, and whether or not we are successful at the end of it is almost beside the point. It would be nice to have an earlier intervention or an earlier conversation to make sure that the department in central government is commissioning bids for projects and activities will make a real difference, as opposed to those that may be slightly more flavour of the month.

Q161 Dr Whitehead: Bearing that in mind, what do you hope to see coming out of the DEFRA review for air quality management?

Councillor Scott: I think we want to see a range of things. Certainly the continued funding for air quality monitoring stations we think is absolutely vital, and indeed for air quality management areas as well. There is a level of modelling that goes with it, which is difficult to escape from, and there is a level of technical expertise that is very important as well. We would want to see that front and centre, a commitment from DEFRA to recognise that local authorities cannot do this by themselves and need some investment support, so that will be the first thing.

I think some clarity about the passporting of fines as well. We understand DEFRA have written to all local authority chief executives to say that it is possible that those fines will now be passported across to local authorities. Clarity about what models are being used to work out any fines that there may be would be really helpful, because at the moment we just have this sword of Damocles really. We have had a letter that says, "At some point in the future we might come and fine you, but you will not know until any time then and we are not going to tell you how much it might be". That is not particularly helpful for long-term planning.

Thirdly, something that clarified within central government the precise nature and responsibilities between DEFRA and the Department for Transport would also be quite helpful; not much.

Dr Whitehead: And possibly startling.

Councillor Scott: Quite.

Q162 Dr Whitehead: In recent years, you have had a lot less ring-fencing for specific purposes in local government. Have you found that has helped the allocation across the authority of funds for air quality or hindered it, inasmuch as it may be the case that people are saying, “You really ought to do this in some way, but we are not sure from where” but it is not ring-fenced, so you can do it?

Councillor Scott: I was elected in 2010 and joined the cabinet in 2012, so I have only ever lived in a non-ring-fenced environment, if you like. I think people who have been on the council for longer will probably have a view about the difficulty that ring-fences presented before then. Certainly I would say we have an awful lot less money, whether it is ring-fenced or not. Our Government grant has been reduced by 50% next year, in common with lots of other larger authorities, particularly northern authorities. To be honest, whether or not there is a ring-fence attached to money that we have been given does not make an awful lot of difference if it is wholly inadequate for the resources that we require, which I think is where we are getting to. Our air quality team now is diminished and we have also had to review some of the air quality stations that we have. They need retrofitting and upgrading themselves and finding the money to do that is becoming harder and harder.

On the ring-fence aspect, I am sure it is very welcome to have that additional freedom and that is very important for local authorities, and as a passionate believer in localism I would say that and I think that is vital, but it is also the case you cannot be a localist and take away such huge amounts of local authorities’ funding. At the same time, if we are localists, and if localism is quite a key part of the Government’s objective, it has to support that ambition with a fair settlement, and my view is that is not what we have had in the last three years and certainly does not appear to be what we will have in the next two either.

Q163 Mike Kane: Councillor Scott, welcome. It is interesting you finished with localism, because my range of questions is around local government powers in relation to the begging bowl and having to come to Westminster. We have never had a solution for the A57 or the A628. There is going to be a new devolved settlement next week, one day or another, and we should not be having to come to the department to do the schemes we want to do, either air quality or the schemes that link our two great cities, Manchester and Sheffield. I live 38 miles away from the centre of Manchester. In the centre of Sheffield, we have two of the worst roads that cut across the Peak District, and yet we have Tube lines that are longer than the distance between our two economic powerhouses. What does that new localism settlement look like to you?

Councillor Scott: In very practical terms, I go back to the discussion I started off with around the Highways Agency. I am not sure it is credible to have an entirely devolved government that is pushing localism, but at the same time if it is anything to do with significant roads, “We will do that, thank you very much”. That is part of the dynamic that we have at the moment, and particularly as it relates to air quality. If you look at the M25 in London, if you look at the M1 in Sheffield or the M62 in Manchester, it is absolutely the case that some of the roads that are the busiest, fastest and most polluting are also the ones that are statutorily completely outside of local authority control.

I am not sure that is a credible position, and if it is a credible position, if that is the decision that is reached and the settlement that is reached, it certainly seems to me the Highways Agency needs to be given a duty to have a view and take cognisance of air

quality issues, which at the moment they have no responsibility to do at all, partly because they are a DfT agency rather than a DEFRA agency. That would be one of the things I would probably touch on first of all, that in terms of fixing the two roads between those two parts of the Golden and Northern Triangle, those are outside of our control to a certain extent anyway and that is very frustrating. I think our residents in Sheffield and indeed Manchester—and probably other places too—find that quite frustrating, that roads that are not major roads, like bypasses, are within the control of the council and much more significant dual or triple carriageways are not. There is no logic to it and it does need addressing probably.

Beyond that though, I also think that there—

Q164 Mike Kane: Let me push you further. Is the settlement an English settlement or is it a northern regional hub settlement linking the banks of the Mersey Estuary to the banks of Humber Estuary and that Golden Triangle?

Councillor Scott: Yes. I was going to come on to say it is the latter probably, so the more ambitious scheme, but I also think there is something we have to do much more effectively culturally probably within local authorities of not coming to Government every time we have a problem, of working together to get a coherent story between ourselves and then presenting a single case, which I suspect if it was Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds and Sheffield all working together and coming to Government and saying, “This is what we need” we would look far more credible in the eyes of Government with some of those bigger asks.

Q165 Mike Kane: You are a Sheffield Hallam councillor, is that right?

Councillor Scott: No, I am a Sheffield Heeley councillor. I was the candidate in Sheffield Hallam in 2010.

Mike Kane: In 2010. That is it, thank you.

Q166 Martin Caton: Councillor Scott, I think in your answer to the first question from the Chair, you mentioned that the relationship between the local authority and local enterprise partnerships can sometimes be problematic. Have you been able to assess the effect of LEPs on air pollution, especially as related to transport?

Councillor Scott: I have, and we had a conversation internally about this issue previously. My view is that while it is undoubtedly the case that air quality has an impact on economic matters within an area and transport is a key part of that, local enterprise partnerships should stick to what they were set up to do. I think there is a very broad discussion about how effective that is anyway and if that structure is working or not, but I do not think that as a local authority we want to see the kind of leadership around air quality moving to local enterprise partnerships, because our view would be that the skill mix within local enterprise partnerships—their boards, effectively—do not have that at the moment and that is not what they were set up to do. They were set up with a focus around economic growth and job creation, so I do not think that they have much information very often to have a view on air quality. Secondly, I do not think we would support a submission or a change in their remit that meant that they took on more around air quality either.

Q167 Martin Caton: We took some evidence, for instance from the Campaign for Better Transport, who expressed real concern about LEPs saying the right things. For instance, a bit of evidence they gave was, “Despite 97% of the LEPs having indicated the value of investing in sustainable travel, only 49% of LEPs have gone on to request capital funding for dedicated walking and cycling or LSTF-style schemes” so I think that tends to support that. But as the Cabinet Member for the Environment, do you have meetings with your local enterprise partnership?

Councillor Scott: Within Sheffield City region, there is a Low Carbon Sector Group of low carbon businesses, and I meet with the chair from time to time, every other month or so, and with members of that as well, so I do not meet with the LEP board particularly. I think, in bluntness, that is because their focus is around a different sector, so in Sheffield’s situation the LEP has said that advanced manufacturing and professional services are the key areas they want to work in, which do not affect my work as much, but certainly with our Low Carbon Sector Group, where we have a range of partners working in green collar industries, I meet with them quite regularly. Those are productive and useful. I think if I can put some words into their mouth, I suspect that they would say that they did not feel the LEP always reflected the ambition or action upon the ambition that we had set out in our growth plan.

Q168 Chair: I want to try to just dig a little deeper on some of the issues that my colleagues have raised. One of them, which is an important one for me, is the whole issue of public health, and I was interested to see that your Director of Public Health is one of the champions for the work that is going on. Of the work and monitoring and health inequalities that will be all part and parcel of the everyday agenda of the Public Health Department, how much is that used to influence the wider air quality agenda but I am thinking as well specifically about spatial planning?

Councillor Scott: I think Sheffield probably is a very good example of that. We had a focused air quality team as a local authority before public health moved across anyway so we did not feel the need, I do not think, to augment that team with public health funds when they became available. More broadly though, it is absolutely the case that our Director of Public Health is entirely signed up to the importance both of air quality issues but also climate change more broadly. I understand his annual report this year will be focusing on the environment and will focus particularly on air quality and climate change.

Q169 Chair: But in a way, my interest is how much note is taken of those reports where decisions are being made? For example, we had some evidence about opposition to a local IKEA shop that is being built. How much notice would be taken of the Director of Public Health or the Health and Wellbeing Board in terms of saying, “This is the wrong place or the wrong site and all it is going to do is increase poor air quality if that particular development goes ahead there”?

Councillor Scott: It is fair to say that the local authority found that a very finely-balanced decision because of the Director of Public Health’s involvement. Had he not made that intervention, I think there would have been much more of speed to approve it, so having—

Q170 Chair: Could you just share with us what difference was made and the satisfaction of the people who were concerned and were wanting to prevent the development, from their perspective as well?

Councillor Scott: The formal submission was made by the Director of Public Health, which is obviously a public record that said quite clearly that there would be a significant negative impact from that development on air quality. Within that submission, the director recognised there would also be a positive benefit to public health around the creation of jobs and I think he recognised that there was a balance between those two as well. More broadly, within the group of people in Sheffield who are interested in air quality, I think it is fair to say they were not satisfied with the outcome of the decision that was reached and they felt that the views of the Director of Public Health should have been taken into account more. My view, having attended the planning committee that reviewed that and discussed it, was that the members of that committee looked at his remarks very closely and gave him significant weight, and had it not been for that submission, I suspect it would not have been as long or tortuous process as it was. So I think that the committee—

Q171 Chair: But the outcome was the same.

Councillor Scott: It was, yes, so I would not—

Chair: So there was not any improvement.

Councillor Scott: I think what I am saying is that had that submission not been made and had the Director of Public Health not had those concerns, our planning department would not have been pushing IKEA for the mitigations that then came forward in the final evaluation.

Q172 Chair: What kind of appraisal do you have to put a value on creation of jobs and alleviation of poverty compared with the issues that would come out in terms of health, in terms of poor air quality?

Councillor Scott: We use a range of things, so we have a transport kind of modelling system that will look at the impact of air quality, netted off against any mitigations that are put in place. I think it is fair to say that it is a developing tool around how you balance off those two issues, because it is an apples and pears comparison and you cannot make a direct comparison between them. I think we all recognise there is a link between more jobs and improved health.

Q173 Chair: Is it just that economics trumps everything all of the time?

Councillor Scott: No, I do not think it is. Had there not been, for example, the mitigations offered by IKEA in this instance, I suspect the planning application may well have been rejected, so I think it is part of the process the local authorities go through in trying to reach a decision, but it is the case as well—I think this was the point that was being made—that the economic aspect is very important. Perhaps just to bring this full circle to the issue about public engagement, certainly it is the case that on that application, the local authority received many times more submissions in favour of IKEA on the basis of jobs than it received objections on the basis of air quality.

Q174 Chair: I know it is a bit tedious to go into the details, but sometimes the devil is in the detail on these issues. For example, perhaps I should know this but I do not: are there, for example, fast-charging electric charging points in the IKEA development?

Councillor Scott: There will be, yes.

Q175 Chair: There will be, okay. Can I move on and just very quickly ask you about location of air quality monitors? I think this is an issue that has come to us from other parts of the country as well. I know that there is guidance from Europe insofar as the measurements that need to be taken, but are you confident that you have sufficient air quality monitors and that they are in the right locations?

Councillor Scott: We would probably want to review them more regularly than we do at the moment, certainly. Of the eight that we have in the eight main stations, two of those operate on behalf of the contract that we have with DEFRA and the other six are owned by the local authority, which I think is probably different to the places where local authorities do not perhaps put as much input into or investment into their own stations, so we are probably in a slightly unique position. We also though want to make sure that we use them more around open data as well. For example, we have a scheme called the Community Diffusion Tube Project in Sheffield, which we have had for several years now, where people can have diffusion tubes placed at roadside locations near their homes or place of work and we share that data publicly, which I think is a really important way of doing it. Air quality monitoring stations are very important, but I suppose I am saying they are not the only tool that we use to try to monitor this and raise public awareness.

Q176 Chair: Almost at the end now but can I ask you in terms of low emission zones, how easy has it been to take those forward, what hurdles there are and what your priorities are for the next phase of development?

Councillor Scott: For us, the most significant benefit so far has been the data we have collected, which has been tremendously useful, so we now know, for example, that if all buses and taxis within Sheffield were Euro 6 or equivalent, then we estimate a 19% reduction in NO_x emissions. That is not sufficient to bring us in line with European requirements, so the most important aspect for us has been to highlight that although a low emission zone for certain types of vehicles would significantly improve air, it would not do it to the extent that we need it to do.

In terms of specific barriers, it is fair to say that a lot of the academic research associated with low emission zone policies in particular are still developing and that is why it makes it quite difficult to compare a Sheffield low emission zone possibility with a Manchester or a Leeds low emission zone possibility, so I think that is one part of it. I also think that there is something around being clear that low emission zones are only part of the solution as well, so for us we would never want to put all of our eggs into that basket. We are clear that we have to do the much harder route, and indeed much more controversial route, of changing public behaviour, as opposed to just relying on a low emission zone by itself.

Q177 Chair: That is exactly where we started. That was going to be my final question. Do you have examples of best practice in terms of public engagement of people understanding that we need to do this because of the health risks? What kind of buy-in do you have? With the initial schemes that Sheffield had many years ago in terms of bus services and the wonderful examples that you had at that time before deregulation set in, what sort of programmes are there that are bringing this home to the general public?

Councillor Scott: The first thing is the diffusion tube project I talked about, which I think is very valuable and does give people a very clear sense of how bad air is near their home or their office. That is very important, first of all.

Secondly, we are shortly to announce a communication plan, which is funded by some money we received from DEFRA, which will be very good, and will contain a range of fairly hard-hitting messages about diesel causing cancer at the same time as more supportive, encouraging ones about cars and, “Why don’t you walk to school?” and those sorts of things.

Thirdly, we are quite clear as well that part of this has to be the council leading by example. We have 10 gas vehicles now, which collect our recycling from kerbsides of properties. That is important, and we are also changing some of our procurement practices as well, so the third element is about the council leading by example in the way that we purchase and procure cars. There is a whole range of projects. I might drop you a note, if that is helpful. All of those are to engage people in public engagement.

Q178 Chair: That is helpful, yes. Going back to the first set of questions about central government and local government and the balance between the two and what you were just saying about low emission zones, would it be helpful, do you think, to have guidance from Government that was UK-wide in terms of low emission standards? Would that be something that should be a priority?

Councillor Scott: Yes, absolutely it should be a priority. It seems very strange to me we have so many local authorities doing very similar work and yet starting all over again from scratch every single time that they do it. The absence of guidance is not especially helpful. I think it would have been useful to have a kind of toolkit for local authorities around the development of low emission zones and also there could be much more done by DEFRA around sharing best practice within local authorities, which again is something I think is not particularly well shared at the moment, unless local authorities do it themselves, effectively.

Q179 Chair: We certainly would not want all the gases that were displaced from Sheffield in the streets of Stoke-on-Trent, for example.

Councillor Scott: That is part of the issue, that we now will have upgraded 40 of our buses across South Yorkshire from some of the worst to some of the best, which is very good. Goodness knows what happened with those buses, and we have no control over that as a local authority and I suspect they might be coming to other places, perhaps near you, in the near future.

Q180 Chair: Not if I have anything to do with it, but yes. Just finally, if there was one recommendation that should come out of our current report, what would you say it should be in terms of urgent action that is needed at either European, national or a local level?

Councillor Scott: I think perhaps one for all three of those. At European level there should be clarity over the fines that are to be levied or the range of costs that those could be, and we have this kind of between £2 million and £800 million, which is not very helpful. I think nationally something around the local authorities’ role in Highways Agency work is very important. I think at a very local level, we need much more effective national campaigns, perhaps run by Public Health England, for example, around the health impacts of poor air quality.

Chair: That is very interesting. Thank you very much indeed. That does bring us to the end of that session. It has been a game of two halves, and we have really appreciated you coming today and the attention to detail and the thoroughness with which obviously you are holding this brief. Thank you very much indeed.

Councillor Scott: Thank you.