

BWTUC Press Statement

Wandsworth Council distorts information on air pollution in the borough

The current edition (Issue 187, March, 2019) of the LB Wandsworth magazine 'Brightside,' contains a misleading headline '*Pollution plummets*' and '*Wandsworth's air pollution levels fell again in 2018, new figures show*'.

Battersea and Wandsworth Trades Union Council (BWTUC) is very concerned about how this public health emergency is being portrayed by the council. It is correct to say that pollution levels have gone down in Putney. Whether they have '**plummeted**' is another matter. Comparing Nitrogen Dioxide levels there was a drop from 76 micrograms per cubic metre to 66 mg/m³ between 2017 to 2018. This is still well over 50% above the safe EU limits. When a word like 'plummet' is used it is normally right to assume that a far more dramatic change has taken place.

This council shows a further disregard for the facts by failing to mention that for other parts of the borough like Clapham Junction, Tooting and Wandsworth, the figures have not dropped at all, but have **flat-lined or got worse**.¹ For example, in Tooting in 2018 the average was 53mg/m³ compared to the period up to the present in 2019 where it is 58mg/m³.² The Council's own Tooting Air Quality Action Plan has never been properly implemented and isn't even on the council web site.

Nowhere in the article does it make it clear that there are dangerous levels of pollution in the borough. It is presented in a way that tries to give the impression residents can rest assured that their leaders are on top of the problem. Nothing could be further from the truth.

In another shameless effort to manipulate the information on the reduction of NO₂ levels in Putney the article goes on to say that '*the fall has been attributed to the council successfully lobbying Transport for London for cleaner buses.*' This ignores the fact that the council was just one of many organisations who lobbied for this. A clear case of trying to take the credit for a TfL decision that they only had a marginal impact on.

Graham Petersen, BWTUC spokesperson, said "*Brightside magazine has long been criticised for using council tax-payers money to pump out Wandsworth Conservative Party propaganda. We are now seeing this again on a matter of huge public concern like air pollution in the borough*"

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¹ Wandsworth Monitoring sites visualisation

<http://www.londonair.org.uk/LondonAir/Data-Visualisations/objectivevstime.aspx>

² London Air Quality Network Statistics

http://www.londonair.org.uk/london/asp/publicstats.asp?mapview=all&statyear=2018&MapType=Google®ion=0&site=WAB&postcode=&la_id=&objective=All&zoom=9&lat=51.475&lon=-0.1198239999999999416&VenueCode=

BWTUC has helped to launch the Trade Union Clean Air Network (TUCAN), currently supported by 11 national unions. It is campaigning for air pollution to be recognised as an occupational health emergency as well as a public health one. Visit the Greener Jobs Alliance web site for more information <http://www.greenerjobsalliance.co.uk/>