

Trade Union Clean Air Network Charter



Trade unions need a response to the public health emergency and also the occupational health emergency of air pollution. Over 40,000 people die each year in the UK where the outdoor air that they breathe is a major contributory factor. Thousands of people will also die because of occupational diseases caused by air pollution at work. Pollution arising from work and travel to work are health issues for which employers take little responsibility. There is hardly any recognition of this in national and local authority strategies. This is an issue for workers and their families at all stages from before birth to old age and particularly damaging the growth and development of babies and children. This charter provides a framework for unions to campaign for the health and environmental concerns of workers. We call on the Government to:

- 1. Introduce a New Clean Air Act that enshrines the right to breathe clean air.** It must set stringent legal limits for ambient air quality, which reflect WHO (World Health Organisation) guidelines. There should be recognition that air pollution is an occupational health issue. Employers must be required to make Environmental Impact Assessments on the pollution related to their work activities. They should have a duty to present strategies for minimising and eradicating pollutants within the workplace and in the wider community.
- 2. Update Health and Safety Law** - The COSHH (Control of Substances Hazardous to Health) Regulations and related guidance should be amended to reflect new research on indoor and outdoor air pollution. This includes amending Workplace Exposure Limits to place duties on employers to monitor and adopt control measures for diesel and other toxic vehicle emissions not currently covered by HSE (Health and Safety Executive) EH40.
- 3. Ensure effective enforcement** – Strict enforcement by relevant agencies of the occupational and environmental legislation with the power to hold public bodies and employers to account. Representatives of the trade union movement must have seats on the relevant agencies.
- 4. Involve the workforce** – Air quality measures for indoor and outdoor occupational air pollution must be subject to the consultation requirements of the SRSC (Safety Reps and Safety Committees) Regulations. Measures should cover both employees and others, and especially the needs of vulnerable occupants of buildings, including in particular children and young people. Employers should be required to raise awareness and support workforce training on risks and control measures. Workers may need access to independent advice on exposure levels and health effects.
- 5. Protect jobs** – Government and employer clean air strategies will have implications for jobs and employment. The application of Just Transition principles, including consultation and negotiation with appropriate and industry unions, must include full equality impact assessments, to ensure positive and fair outcomes for all workers.
- 6. Rapidly expand clean and inexpensive public transport systems alongside investment in active transport to increase levels of cycling and walking** – Cleaning up air in the UK will require significant public expenditure. Government should drive the policies to ensure that those least able to afford it are not expected to pick up the bill, and to subsidise measures for less polluting forms of energy and transport. Including affordable public transport. This will encourage more integrated and more active forms of transport.

