



## Report of the TUCAN meeting held Thursday, 8<sup>th</sup> October 1.30-2.30 on International Clean Air Day

Janet Newsham welcomed everyone to the zoom meeting and briefly outlined the history of the formation of TUCAN. She also highlighted the contradictions facing campaigns on clean air during and since the lock-down, including the reduction in pollution levels as a result of a reduction in commuters but at the same time the fear of infection by using public transport and

the reduction in its use.

TUCAN was set up to take the issue of air pollution back into workplaces. To empower workers to challenge their employers when they are increasing air pollution in their communities because of their policies and work activities. TUCAN has created a charter supported by the founder trade unions and organisations and also guidance for discussions in workplaces. There has been a number of training events held across the country.

Even though air pollution has been put down the agenda because of the pandemic it is now emerging as a key campaigning issue and unites community and workplace activists. There have been a number of studies during the pandemic which have shown that previous long term exposure to air pollution has led to greater risks of death and more severe symptoms from Covid-19. This is thought to be because exposure to air pollution causes long term conditions in lung and heart. At the start of the pandemic infection rates were highest in cities where air pollution was also high. <https://theconversation.com/air-pollution-exposure-linked-to-higher-covid-19-cases-and-deaths-new-study-141620>

Air Pollution has been responsible for thousands of deaths in the UK – A study reported in the European Heart Journal estimated 64,000 deaths in UK in 2015. In Europe an estimated 790,000 additional deaths and more deaths than smoking kills 7.9million. The World Health Organisation estimates 8.8 million. What is clear from this, is that air pollution has to be tackled.

There are recent reports in the press about air pollution in young brains linked to Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease and the importance of studying children and their exposure to air pollution. These again highlight the detrimental impact of air pollution. <https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/about-dementia/risk-factors-and-prevention/air-pollution-and-dementia>

We also need to recognise that there are sinister voices out there representing global business who are lobbying to restrict any air pollution measures. There is a recent report in DeSmog which provides useful information about the companies involved. It is sobering reading covers organisations like Trade Association for Automotive Sector where although there is recognition of health damage by diesel, it also defends and wants to expand the use of diesel vehicles. <https://www.desmog.co.uk/2020/10/05/revealed-lobby-groups-backed-big-brands-fighting-against-air-pollution>

Teaching unions had been increasingly concerned about the impact on children, their interactive map of air pollution around schools. More than 25% British schools, nurseries and colleges are surrounded by dangerously high levels of air pollution.

Janet also commented on delay in the Environment Bill and Asthma UK and BLF have relaunched their campaign for WHO guidelines for 2.5 pm and urging people to write to their MPs.

Cat Leggat from Global Action Plan then spoke to us about Clean Air Day which is in its 4<sup>th</sup> year although it was postponed from its usual time in June. She highlighted the shift in behaviours and the initial increase in people walking and cycling and the need to encourage people to keep up the momentum. <https://www.globalactionplan.org.uk/>

Cat spoke about the key calls for action to clean our air journey and the need for workers to continue flexible working and working from home and the need for proactive enforcement to control risks of higher levels of air pollution. Global Action Plan's role is to fuel the Clean Air movement by mobilising and enabling people and organisations to act on air pollution and ensure their voice is heard

More information from the Global Action Plan website:

1. To breathe clean air every day we need to make rapid changes: adopting electric vehicles, avoiding millions of car journeys, slashing industrial and construction emissions, and stopping buying products that cause pollution in our homes. To see change at this scale requires us to work as a movement, with changemakers across the country modelling that change, and exerting pressure on government and major polluters.

Air pollution causes heart and lung disease and results in over 36,000 people in the UK dying each year. Clean air is essential for our health, and the co-benefits of clean air measures are also good for our wellbeing as well as being good for the planet.

## 2. Build Back Cleaner Air –

The coronavirus crisis and lockdown measures have had a profound impact on our health and freedom. However, these circumstances have also resulted in a rare opportunity to reflect, reconsider and change the way we are living for the better. As unwelcome as this situation is, we must take this chance to ensure clean air is part of our new “normal”.

## 3. HELP US BUILD BACK CLEANER AIR

The Clean Air Hub - The Clean Air Hub is the UK's go-to-public information source on air pollution It is a web platform that brings together reliable, easy to understand information together in one place, giving the public confidence in the information they are receiving on the sources and health impacts of air pollution, air pollution forecasts and, crucially, air pollution action.

## 4. Clean Air Day

Clean Air Day is the UK's largest air pollution campaign, engaging thousands of people at hundreds of events, and reaching millions more through the media. This year, Clean Air Day is on 8 October 2020. Coordinated by Global Action Plan, Clean Air Day brings together communities, businesses, education and the health sector, improving public understanding of air pollution, building awareness of how air pollution affects our health and explaining some of the easy things we can all do to tackle air pollution, helping to protect our health and the environment too.

## 5. Air Pollution Calculator

Air pollution affects you from your first breath to your last and kills up to 36,000 people each year in the UK. But our air pollution crisis is solvable. Use our Personal Air Pollution Calculator to work out your individual contribution to air pollution in the UK, and find out what you can do to reduce emissions and protect your health.

#### 6. Clean Air Hospital Framework

Air pollution is a health issue, but it is also a health opportunity and is one that every healthcare organisation needs to act on. Developed in partnership with Great Ormond Street Hospital, use the Clean Air Hospital Framework to develop a bespoke clean air action plan for your hospital. Self-assess your progress and set ambitions on tackling air pollution in seven key areas: travel, procurement & supply chain, construction, energy, local air quality, communication & training and hospital outreach & leadership

#### 7. The Clean Air for Schools Framework

Children are one of the groups most at risk from air pollution. We therefore need to improve air quality in and around schools. To help headteachers and governors decide which actions will best tackle the air pollution problem in their school we have developed the Clean Air for Schools Framework. This easy-to-use online tool will help any school develop and implement a clean air action plan with links to the UK's best guidance on resources on how to improve local air quality and reduce students exposure to air pollution.

#### 8. Clean Air Public Insights Tracker

It is vital that an accurate and up to date understanding of public awareness, attitudes and behaviour around air pollution is at the heart of all public engagement and local and national decision making. In partnership with Opinium we run the UK wide Clean Air Public Insight Tracker (CAPIT) which provides quarterly information on public awareness and attitudes to air quality and how the public are modifying their behaviour to protect themselves.

#### 9. Business for Clean Air

Developed by the Business for Clean Air Taskforce, Business for Clean Air (BfCA) is a voluntary initiative that companies can join to signal their commitment to addressing air pollution. Clean air makes business sense, and the BfCA resources provide support on what to do to reap these benefits. Join with other major businesses to forge a movement of companies committed to improving air quality, cutting emissions and cleaning up communities across the UK.

#### 10. Business Clean Air Taskforce

The Business Clean Air Taskforce (B-CAT) is a coalition of businesses committed to improving air quality in the UK. The B-CAT mission is to help accelerate the transition to a society with clean and healthy air in a way that ensures the public realises the benefit and avoids any risks of the transition. In order to do this, the B-CAT will galvanise other businesses to make the low pollution choice easier and more attractive for people.

#### 11. Clean Van Commitment

Global Action Plan and its partners are asking van fleet operators and individual van owners to sign up to the Clean Van Commitment – a public pledge to move to zero emission vans in

cities by 2028. By joining the government-backed Clean Van Commitment (CVC) and switching to zero emission vans, you'll be helping to improve the air our communities breathe, reduce greenhouse gases and drive economic growth.

Graham Petersen Greener Jobs Alliance gave an update about their involvement in Client Earth's Healthy Air Campaign, Diesel trains and Camden Council. With some additional notes from their current newsletter:

- Pollution levels are rising again after a period during lockdown when there were significant reductions. New analysis from the Environmental Defence Fund Europe shows that, outside the centre of London, levels are now higher than in 2019. <https://bit.ly/33QMO7M>
- The National Education Union (NEU) is promoting new Clean Air for Schools resources: "The NEU continues to be hugely concerned about the impact of air pollution on children and therefore welcomes this new resource which will help raise awareness of the impact of air pollution and also help schools to take practical steps to improve their own environment," says Kevin Courtney, NEU Joint General Secretary, National Education Union. <https://bit.ly/3mBNE0D>
- These increases will have an impact on occupational health. CBI research shows that polluted air in the UK causes 3million working days to be lost every year owing to people getting sick or taking time off to care for sick children. <https://bit.ly/2FBJrth>
- With EU research showing 1 in 8 deaths linked to pollution the need for action has never been greater. The Trade Union Clean Air Network (TUCAN) is working with the Healthy Air Campaign to press for the implementation of World Health Organisation (WHO) standards on particulate matter in the government's upcoming Environment Bill. [www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-54071380](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-54071380)
- We are also joining with Global Action Plan to support actions around Clean Air Day on October 8th. One event is a session called 'Cleaner air for healthier employees.' We will be discussing the importance of good air quality in the office, the home office, and industrial workplace, and what can be done by employees, unions and companies to clean up the air we breathe while we work. A recording of this event that Graham participated in can be found at (11 hours of this on Thursday the TUCAN stuff comes in between 10.49 - 10.53). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NLeIxsyMykA&feature=youtu.be&t=34650>
- The CBI Report 'Breathing life into the UK economy' can be found here: <https://bit.ly/2FRvalv>
- Yet another official report, this time from the Institute for Government, shows that the Johnson government strategy for achieving net zero is failing <https://bit.ly/3iOMFaX>
- In the absence of effective national leadership, the GJA is looking to regional and local authorities to step up. Many have declared climate emergencies, while the Local Government Association has issued guidance on 10 questions to ask to scrutinise these local strategies <https://bit.ly/32P2IAd>
- The GJA has also recently published guidance for union reps looking to interrogate local plans in their communities. <https://bit.ly/2FDpxOB>
- We would value any feedback on union experiences of trying to influence the content and delivery of local and regional climate related actions. Of course, some authorities are more receptive than others. Where it is not possible to establish any effective engagement there may be a need to campaign for alternative approaches.

- In South London, the GJA has linked up with Battersea and Wandsworth Trades Council to address concerns about the climate strategy of the London Borough of Wandsworth. The focus has been on Low Carbon building in the borough as the best way to address carbon emissions, social justice issues like fuel poverty, job creation and skills. Our proposals can be found here <https://bit.ly/2ZU4uxS>
- The GJA is assisting trade union input to local and regional policies around different parts of the UK. Please contact us if you have any case studies we can use for a good and bad practice guide scheduled for the end of this year.

**Graham also mentioned that we are investigating an Air quality apprenticeship along with Client Earth. And much more!**

### **Discussion and Action**

In the discussion it was reported that the RMT are calling for Government action to support the railways as people return to work in private cars rather than public transport. The issue of replacement of diesel trains was introduced.

There was also a discussion about green reps and the need for more action. The need to link issues and where Risk Assessments were being reviewed to also look at including air pollution controls being introduced.

Also there was a discussion raised about litigation and air pollution exposure and the need to explore different approaches.

Finally, it was agreed that we should look to organising an event in January – online around air pollution, including litigation and practical steps to achieving it.

Also it was agreed to explore holding some demonstration/action at the Ella Kissi-Debra inquest which is starting on November 30<sup>th</sup>. The outcome of the case could have implications for Air Pollution Action.

The following was previously circulated in the lead up to Clean Air Day and we would encourage as many people as possible to complete the survey, look at how we can use the monitor in our workplaces and share any action that your members have taken on Clean Air Day and we will publish them in our next newsletter

### **What are you doing on 8th October Clean Air Day?**

Earlier this year Greener Jobs Alliance/TUCAN jointly took a share in some air pollution monitoring equipment with Global Action Plan. The Personal Aerosol Monitor is a miniature battery operated laser photometer that measures airborne particle mass concentration in units of milligrams per cubic meter (mg/m<sup>3</sup>). The equipment can measure to particulate matter pm 2.5. We are now looking to loan it out to workplaces to support trade union workplace air pollution monitoring. **So if you would like to borrow the equipment for a couple of weeks then please email me and we will schedule a time for you to use the equipment.**

We have also been asked to circulate a survey about action on air pollution which has been produced by Global Action Plan.

"Global Action Plan is seeking to determine the extent to which air quality is a significant issue in the workplace. Your answers to the survey will be used to inform the project into clean air workplaces. All responses are anonymous." The survey can be found here: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/MBXYK8G>.

**Please can you share the survey widely and encourage reps to complete it.**

**Another idea is for you to circulate to individuals or put up posters in your workplace if you are in work, about air pollution and or climate change** and UCU produced a great poster which can be found at <https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/10844/The-future-we-choose>

We also produced some TUCAN posters and the link to them is below.

Your trade union may be doing something else, but try and do something.

I hope you are able to join us in taking some action even if it from the comfort of your own home or the social distanced workplace.

with best wishes

Janet Newsham

Chair Hazards Campaign / TUCAN

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Useful Links:

<https://www.globalactionplan.org.uk/clean-air/clean-air-day>

<https://www.cleanairday.org.uk/scotland>

<https://www.transform-our-world.org/clean-air-day>

TUCAN charter/newsletters -<http://www.greenerjobsalliance.co.uk/air-pollution/>

[Guidance on Air Pollution for Union Reps](#)