

Dear Editor,

### **Air pollution in Bath**

You carried a report last week about the alarming findings from a mobile pollution monitor in Bath ('Double trouble over the state of polluted air').

The levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) gas found in the city are indeed alarming. But this should come as no surprise. B&NES has been monitoring NO<sub>2</sub> in Bath since the 1990s, and the results show consistently high levels throughout the city. This map, published in the Council's 2011 Air Quality Action Plan, illustrates the annual average NO<sub>2</sub> levels in the city. Anything red or darker is over the legal limit of 40 micrograms per cubic meter (µg/m<sup>3</sup>). In many places, NO<sub>2</sub> levels are 50% over the legal limit. This limit is enshrined in EU and British law and reflects the level at which the World Health Organisation considers that NO<sub>2</sub> is harmful to health. These levels of pollution are unlawful as well as damaging to our health.

About 10,000 Bath residents live in the affected areas, and many others work in them or travel through them. The Government estimates that 29,000 deaths a year are due to NO<sub>2</sub>; that corresponds to about 30 deaths a year in the small city of Bath.

The situation is not improving. B&NES data show no significant reduction in NO<sub>2</sub> pollution in recent years, and pollution may even be increasing in the centre.

92% of air pollution in Bath is due to traffic. Along busy main roads like the A4 and A36, Heavy Goods Vehicles make a large contribution. However diesel cars are also major culprits, and pollution from cars is a major factor in the central area.

It is no use telling us, as some do, that Bath's hills cause the problem. Certainly the bowl in which the city sits does not help, but the hills are not going to disappear any time soon. The only thing that will reduce the pollution is to reduce the volume of traffic in the city.

This situation has been allowed to continue for far too long. The Bath Transport Strategy, which was approved by the Council with all-party support in 2014, provides a blueprint for reducing traffic and so reducing pollution. However, little has been done since then to implement the Strategy. The Council needs to develop the Strategy into a transport plan for Bath, and to implement it with vigour and determination.

Regards

Patrick Rotheram, FoBRA Transport Lead, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2016