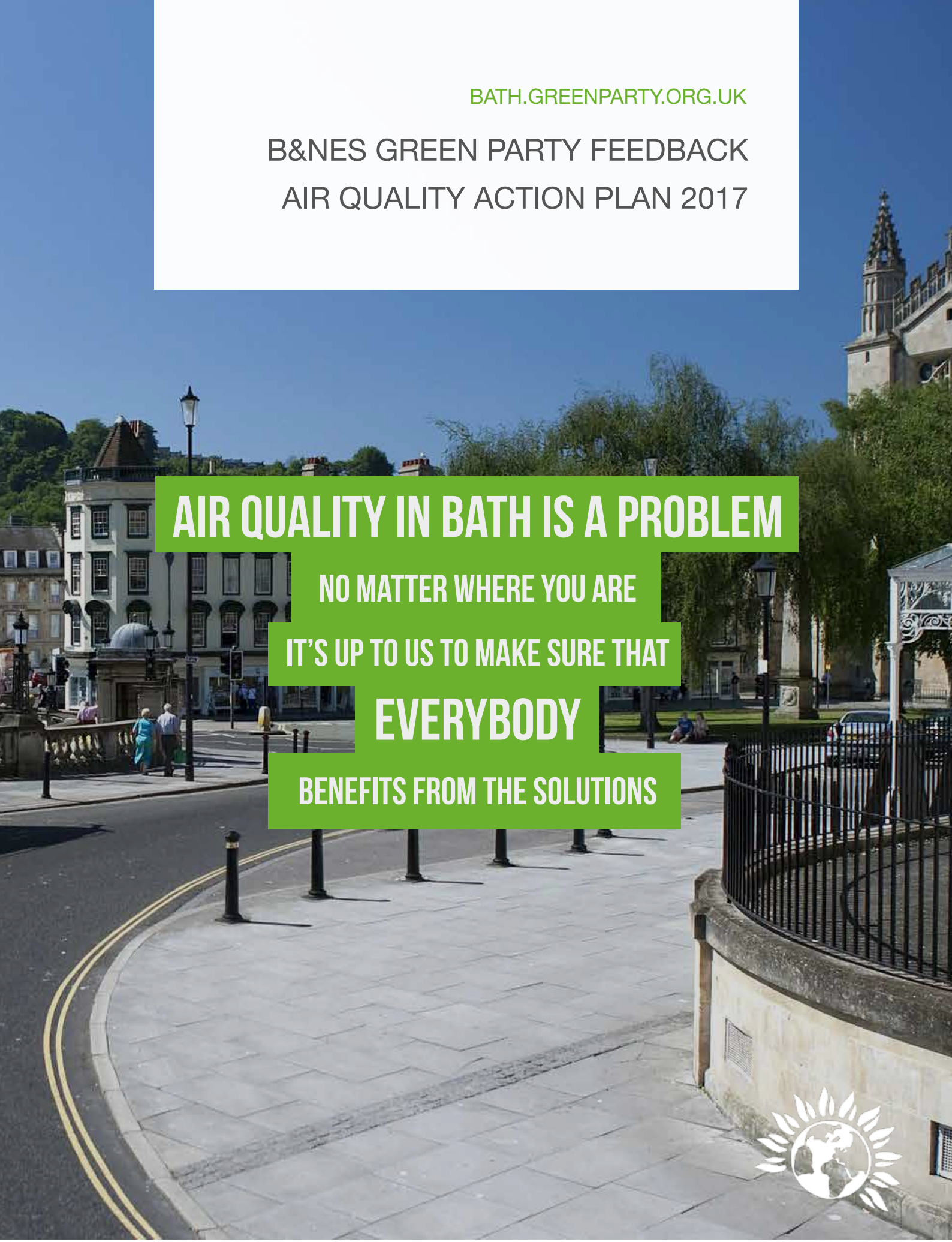
BATH.GREENPARTY.ORG.UK

B&NES GREEN PARTY FEEDBACK AIR QUALITY ACTION PLAN 2017



Published and promoted by Hugh Prentice on behalf of Bath & N.E. Somerset Green Party at Canteen Cottage, Bath, BA2 8PY

B&NES Green Party Feedback for the Air Quality Action Plan 2017

Several members of B&NES Green Party recently attended the Transition Bath Transport & Built Environment meeting on Thursday 23rd January 2017 and took part in a discussion relating to your Air Quality Action Plan. We have since put together the following document to give our feedback for your consideration.

We are grateful to council officers Aled and Robin for further pursuing the safeguarding of healthy air quality for the foreseeable future. Air quality is one of B&NES Green Party's key issues in Bath as is evident in our Let Bath Breathe campaign, so we are grateful to have the opportunity to present our feedback to you.

The concerns:

Air quality in Bath is a problem no matter where you are located and it is in the best interests of the council and the people of Bath to make sure everybody benefits from the solutions presented in the Air Quality Action Plan.

"It is now our task to ensure we establish robust systems, including scrutiny and audit, that can help ensure the benefits of the deal can be used effectively within the region. We will also plan ahead to secure even greater opportunities offered by future devolution deals."
– Statement in the invitation to the first WECA meeting

Air quality is inextricably linked in Bath and North East Somerset, particularly in the urban areas, to transportation. The difficulty with plans to improve air quality and sustainable travel in the past, has been of good intentions but very limited impact. With no oversight or influence over the transport planners, their priorities are almost always about traffic flow, in particular for private and commercial vehicles, with virtually no attention given to sustainable, active, non-polluting forms of transport that are in the interests of environmental quality and public health and well being.

The lack of good quality evidence is cited in the Defra May 2016 report as a major obstacle to implementing schemes.

uk-air.defra.gov.uk/assets/documents/reports/-cat05/1605120947_AQ0959_appendix_1-evidence_review_on_air_quality_effects_of_transport_measures.pdf (pg 50)

The possibilities:

They conclude: "Indeed, the evidence suggests that greater reductions in NOX and improvements in air quality may occur when a number of measures are integrated and packaged together. For example, a low emission zone designed to target the higher polluting vehicles can be supported by a package of complementary measures. Such complementary measures can include: improvements in walking, cycle, bus and train facilities; traffic management and pricing mechanisms (to discourage, for example, zone peripheral parking, and peripheral cut through routes); and incentives to encourage uptake to meet vehicle emission compliance such as retrofit or scrappage schemes. If designed appropriately, such measures not only reduce air pollutant emissions but can also provide climate change benefits as well as wider benefits such as noise reduction, congestion alleviation and economic development."

A goal must be to establish robust scrutiny and audit systems for environmental quality, based on good evidence, which do not merely inform transport planning but drive it.

On analysis of the visual data which was included in the presentation and as a hand-out, we find the evidence pointing towards the high NOX emissions by buses/coaches, rather than the diesel car, which the data, for example from the London Road would indicate. The issue with buses/coaches is that the emissions are lower per person if the vehicle is full, but they are very high if the numbers of passengers are low.

To that end, we cannot use this evidence to target the diesel car in particular, rather to encourage the council to look at the issues surrounding take-up of places on buses- that they need to be very cheap, possibly subsidized for currently underused routes, reliable and frequent. At the moment, for example, it costs four people £16 return from Batheaston to Bath bus station, whereas to transport the four people and park in Charlotte Street carpark is £5.30 for five hours. This is a disincentive to use the bus service.

If you look at the council data for Manvers Street/ Dorchester Street the NOX emissions from buses is very high, which makes sense as this is the area of the bus station. Standard buses which run on diesel are not an environmentally friendly solution as outlined above and cannot be seen as preferable to diesel cars unless they are carrying lots of passengers.

Our suggestions:

B&NES Green Party have a number of suggestions which could reduce air pollution across the entire city, benefiting not just residents in the centre:

- Drastically reduce access to city centre and available parking for non-residents, alongside investment in regular, cheap, reliable public transport from the journey's source, i.e. not a car journey to a park and ride car park followed by a short bus journey. This just encourages more traffic to pollute the peripheral areas of the city.
- Focus money on sensible, affordable solutions such as hydrogen and electric buses – or as a short-term solution, retrofit current buses to reduce emissions.
- Prioritise developing safe routes to every school so that children can be encouraged to walk and cycle to them – reducing school run traffic.
- We would support the principle of congestion charging, provided that its effects are rigorously tested and it is introduced in a sensitive way that involves all those likely to be affected.
- Work with bus operators to make provision for carrying of bikes, particularly on those buses serving the hilliest areas of Bath.
- Reinstate non-polluting school bus transport for students over a certain distance or with other eligibility criteria.
- Promote 'Red Light, Left Turns' for bicycles at certain junctions within the city (where safe to do so) to allow bicycles to be promoted as a faster mode of transport.

Council officers may find great use in signing up to helpful initiatives to boost air quality action in Bath. One B&NES Green Party recommends is BreatheLife: breathelife2030.org/breathelife-cities/become-a-breathelife-city/

By signing up to become a BreatheLife City, Bath can share air quality data, make use of already provided resources, help indicate priority solution areas and more. Bristol has already signed up to this scheme, you can find their data here: breathelife2030.org/city-data-page/?city=2560

Most importantly, our focus as residents and representatives of Bath, should be to Let Bath Breathe.