

**Clean Air Everywhere – Petition to Reading Borough Council – Wednesday 22/11/2017**

Reading Friends of the Earth presented their ‘Clean Air Everywhere – In Reading’ petition to Reading Borough Councillors Tony Page and David Absolom outside the Civic Offices on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> November.

The petition – now signed by over 400 people - says:

**“I call for a new air quality action plan to be put in place by 2018 with the necessary resources to cut all pollutant levels to below World Health Organisation guidelines by 2020.”**

The petition was then discussed at the Strategic Environment Planning and Transport Committee which is chaired by Cllr. Absolom. Cllr. Page is the Lead Councillor for Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport.

Reading FoE Co-ordinator Enrico Petrucco said the government has not ensured that diesel vehicles meet high enough standards, and is not funding local authorities to do enough to improve air quality. Reading’s current action plan lists many positive actions but does not quantify the benefits expected from each so it is not clear what effect they will have.

Measurements show that central Reading’s streets are above the legal limit for Nitrogen dioxide - a toxic gas that inflames the lining of the lungs – but government recommends no action.

Even more dangerous are micro-particles ‘PM2.5’ which can enter and persist within the alveoli, the deepest part of the lungs. Reading FoE want the Council to assess the risks of PM2.5 on the busiest streets and take appropriate actions.

Enrico Petrucco said “Cleaner air requires some combination of cleaner vehicles and/or fewer vehicles – both should be considered but we note that traffic reduction and modal shift to public transport, walking and cycling can also reduce congestion and greenhouse gases – potentially win, win, win!”

At the meeting Councillor Page thanked FoE for the petition and said their concerns are shared by all members of the Committee. Reading intends to bring forward a report in 2018 when there should be more information from the government - which is being sued by Client Earth about air quality. Reading will keenly await assistance from government in terms of implementing a Clean Air Zone and associated measures to improve air quality.

Commenting on the Council’s update on its Air Quality Plan (at Item 10 on the Agenda):

Councillor Page said the council had been committed since 2009 to installing a Low Emission Zone if support from central government made it possible. He looked forward to the government providing more detail and funding in 2018.

Councillor Duveen said that without a Low Emission Zone citizens would be condemned to several more years, if not decades, of disease and death caused by diesel and petrol engines.

Councillor McGonigle asked if railway electrification would make much difference. Councillor Page said that delays in electrification meant that diesel trains would remain a noise and air quality issue for a long time.

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*Councillors Page (left) and Absolom (right) with Enrico Petrucco – Co-ordinator of Reading FoE (centre).*



*Campaigners Richard Cocks and John Booth with banner*



## Notes:

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Reading FoE web-page:

[www.readingfoe.org.uk](http://www.readingfoe.org.uk)

Sources:

Royal College of Physicians “Every Breath We Take”

World Health Organization, ‘Review of evidence on health aspects of air pollution – REVIHAAP Project’, 2013 [http://www.euro.who.int/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/193108/REVIHAAP-Final-technical-report-final-version.pdf?ua=1](http://www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/193108/REVIHAAP-Final-technical-report-final-version.pdf?ua=1)

Reading’s Joint Strategic Needs Assessment <http://www.reading.gov.uk/article/9439/Air-Quality>

<https://wintoncentre.maths.cam.ac.uk/news/does-air-pollution-kill-40000-people-each-year-uk>

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/633270/air-quality-plan-detail.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/633270/air-quality-plan-detail.pdf)

Reading Update on Air Quality – Item 10 at SEPT meeting

[http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/7973/Item10-AirQuality-update-FINAL/pdf/Item10\\_AirQuality\\_update\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/7973/Item10-AirQuality-update-FINAL/pdf/Item10_AirQuality_update_FINAL.pdf)

Link to Video of SEPT meeting – petition presentation starts 2 minutes in – ‘Item 10’ is much later.

[https://channel.royalcast.com/readingboroughcouncil/#!/readingboroughcouncil/20171122\\_1](https://channel.royalcast.com/readingboroughcouncil/#!/readingboroughcouncil/20171122_1)