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Sir Mark Hendrick MP
House of Commons
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Our ref: MC2019/08355/GM

24 April 2019
RECEIVED

29 APR 2019

Dear Mark,

Thank you for your email of 15 April to the Secretary of State on behalf of your constituent about air quality. I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area.

The Government is committed to continue improving the UK's air quality and actions are ongoing to support implementation of measures that will minimise air pollution. We recognise that air pollution can especially affect young children as they develop. We have published our new Clean Air Strategy, which includes new and ambitious goals, legislation, investment and policies for England, which will help us to clean up our air faster and more effectively.

We are the first major economy to set goals working towards the World Health Organization (WHO) recommendations on Particulate Matter emissions, which is why the WHO has praised our Clean Air Strategy as an example for the rest of the world to follow. We are investing £3.5 billion in plans to reduce harmful emissions from road transport and in July 2018, the Government published the Road to Zero Strategy, which sets out our comprehensive approach to reducing emissions from road vehicles and meet our 2040 mission to end the sale of new conventional petrol and diesel cars and vans. The Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy published in 2017 sets out the Government's plans for cycling and walking, with an ambition up to 2040 for making cycling and walking the natural choices for short journeys or as part of a longer journey.

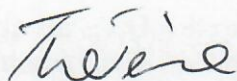
Defra publishes extensive air quality information on its UK Air website: <https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk>. Information on this website includes daily air pollution forecasts and hourly monitoring data. Health advice is provided when pollutant levels are elevated. During episodes of elevated air pollution, the Department works closely with Public Health England and a network of health charities to ensure that key health messages are communicated to those who are vulnerable to the effects of air pollution, in addition to communicating through our normal digital channels.

Local authorities are responsible for mitigation of local air pollution in areas where people may be exposed, including schools. They have the necessary powers to take actions to improve local air quality. For example, they can issue Fixed Penalty Notices to drivers leaving engines running unnecessarily after being asked to turn off their engine. They are also able to introduce Clean Air Zones where they are needed, bringing in targeted measures to improve air quality.

We have provided almost £500 million to local authorities to enable action to tackle harmful roadside emissions of nitrogen dioxide and over £3 million has been awarded to local authorities this year via the air quality grant fund. We have also introduced the Implementation Fund to support local authorities to take action as soon as possible, encouraging implementation of measures such as electric charge point hubs, traffic management systems via junction improvements and bus priority measures, and incentivising ultra-low emission taxis through licensing schemes and leasing electric vehicles.

Policy decisions on planning and development are for individual local authorities and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). Defra does not participate in the planning process, but works with MHCLG to ensure policies relating to air quality management are embedded in the National Planning Policy Framework which local authorities must have regard to when making planning decisions.

Yours sincerely,



DR THERESE COFFEY MP