

# A breath of fresh air

Six key recommendations for action on health and climate change

The UK Health Alliance on Climate Change recommends six strategies, which simultaneously address two major challenges: air pollution and climate change. We suggest that a joined-up approach - tackling these threats together - can reap enormous benefits, particularly for the most vulnerable people in the UK.

Health benefits: Medium

Health benefits

Reduce the number of health-focused policies which have an adverse effect on the environment

Promoting diesel cars

Biomass

Some conventional biofuels

## 1 Cross-departmental collaboration

Increase cross-departmental collaboration to promote a joined-up approach to tackling air pollution and climate change.



Environmental benefits

Medium

Reduce the unintended adverse health effects of policies which only consider the environment

Flue gas desulphurisation

3-way catalysts (petrol)

Particulate filters (diesel)

Health benefits: High

Health benefits

A complete end to UK coal use would prevent:

1 600

Premature deaths

68 000

Additional days of medication

363 266

Working days lost

1 million

Incidents of lower respiratory symptoms

Up to £3.1bn

Costs incurred

## 2 Phase out coal

The Alliance calls for a rapid coal phase out, by 2025, and the creation of a policy environment that supports clean energy sources.



Environmental benefits

Medium

Eliminating coal use would reduce the UK's greenhouse gas emissions by:



Health benefits: Medium

Health benefits

Clean air zones

Better urban planning



More walking and cycling

Less respiratory disease

Better health and quality of life

## 3 Clean air zones

Expand clear air zones to urban centres beyond London. Strengthen them, to include private vehicles. Encourage cycling and walking.



Environmental benefits

Low

Clean air zones

Better urban planning



More walking and cycling

Decreased CO2 emissions

Lessened impact of climate change

Health benefits: Low

Health benefits

Vulnerable people are disproportionately affected by air pollution

Children

Older people

People with chronic health problems

Publicly available, clearly communicated data on air quality could be used to make them aware of the risks

## 4 Better monitoring

Place air quality monitors around schools, hospitals, and healthcare facilities, where vulnerable populations are concentrated.



Environmental benefits

Low

Increased engagement with air pollution can lead to a greater uptake of measures to tackle it

Cycling instead of driving

Home insulation

Greater uptake of these measures will also benefit emissions reduction

Health benefits: Medium

Health benefits

EU regulations define limits for:

CO

Carbon monoxide

NO<sub>2</sub>

Nitrogen dioxide

SO<sub>2</sub>

Sulphur dioxide

PM10

Particulate matter

O<sub>3</sub>

Ozone

Pb

Lead

+ Certain toxic heavy metals

## 5 Retain standards from EU regulations

It is essential that the UK continues to work with the EU in responding to trans-boundary air pollution sources and reducing climate change.



Environmental benefits

Medium

Climate change can only be tackled through collective action, and therefore we need to continue close collaboration with the EU



Health benefits: Low

Health benefits

Health professionals can lead the way as advocates for more active and less polluting lifestyles

- Pollution near generation sites

- Respiratory disease + Exercise

+ Quality of life

## 6 Health Professionals taking action

We recommend health services and professionals:

Switch to clean energy providers

Use and promote cycling, walking, and LEVs<sup>1</sup>

Provide more care in people's homes

Environmental benefits

High

It is estimated that measures like these could reduce NHS carbon emissions by one million tonnes a year by 2020<sup>2</sup>

- Greenhouse gases from generation

- Greenhouse gases from transport

- Need for travel to healthcare sites

<sup>1</sup> LEV = Low Emissions Vehicles (such as electric cars). <sup>2</sup> *Securing Health Returns*, NHS England, 15 June 2016.