

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP  
Secretary of State  
Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs  
Nobel House  
17 Smith Square  
London SW1P 3JR

22/09/17

Dear Secretary of State

I am writing to express my concern regarding the potential effects on our environment, and in particular air quality, as a result of the Brexit process currently being negotiated by government.

As current standards on air quality are determined by EU legislation, there is a strong fear that leaving the EU will lead to the dilution of strict air quality standards to suit short-term economic and political pressures. The current cohesive working on research and mitigation across nations is also at risk, with the UK limited in its access and influence over European policy makers.

Here in Lambeth, as a heavily polluted Inner London Borough, we are serious about improving our air quality, and that of London. We have done extensive work, alongside the Mayor of London and other London Boroughs, in efforts to measure air pollution, raise awareness amongst our residents, limit our residents' exposure to harmful air and to actually improve the quality of our air through reducing traffic and high polluting vehicles and promoting small, everyday things that all our staff and residents can do to reduce their impact on the environment. You can see more information about this work, and our Air Quality Action Plan, by visiting [www.lambeth.gov.uk/airquality](http://www.lambeth.gov.uk/airquality).

I am calling on you as a representative of Her Majesty's Government to commit to working on the following four areas after Brexit to ensure that the UK does its part to improve air quality and protect current and future generations from the fatal effects of polluted air.

- **Collaborate with other European countries to reduce air pollution.** Air pollution does not respect borders and much of the UK's pollution level is contributed to by pollutants released from the European mainland. It is therefore essential that following Brexit, we continue to work with neighbouring countries to reduce levels of pollution.
- **Commit to bold action to tackle air pollution, even without pressure from EU regulation.** The current government has proved reluctant to publish serious and ambitious plans to tackle air pollution, having to be forced into producing an action plan following pressure

from EU legislation and Client Earth campaign group. Without being subject to EU legislation, we are concerned that the government will duck this responsibility.

- **Give assurance that the UK will not discard or water down EU air quality standards following Brexit.** The UK struggles to meet current EU standards and this government has failed to prove itself in its ambition to improve air quality levels. It is essential that Brexit is not used as a tool to ignore current standards and there must be a commitment to not only work to meet current standards but also seek to extend them with other European countries. In his draft Environment Strategy recently released for consultation, the Mayor of London has committed to the capital meeting World Health Organisation guidelines for PM2.5 by 2030, which is an annual mean of  $10\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ . The EU objective for PM2.5 is  $25\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ , and I would encourage similar ambitious thinking by central government.
- **Continue financial and political support for collaborative research with other EU countries.** We are learning more and more about the effects of air pollution on both the environment and on human health. Following Brexit there is a concern that the UK will not work as closely with European neighbours to research the effects of air pollution and how to reduce emissions. We must commit to continue working on research projects and sharing best practice.

There is no scientific doubt regarding the fatal nature of poor air quality and the effect it has on our citizens, particularly the young and the elderly. Following Brexit it may be easy for the government to ignore standards and previous commitments, and harder to collaborate effectively with neighbouring countries, but I urge you to make a firm commitment to stand up and make a difference.

Yours sincerely



Cllr Jennifer Brathwaite  
Lambeth Cabinet Member for Environment & Housing