



# Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee

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## From the Chairman of the Committee

Dr Therese Coffey  
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs  
Nobel House  
17 Smith Square  
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14 December 2016

Thank you for attending the Committee's evidence session yesterday on air quality, along with John Hayes. Our discussion covered a wide range of areas where urgent action is needed to reduce emission levels and protect the health of those living and working in pollution hot-spots.

The Committee was disappointed with the information Ministers provided. We are extremely concerned that, despite the courts twice rejecting its plans, the Government has failed to grasp the serious impacts of poor air quality on British people. We seek your assurance that the new plans Defra and the Department for Transport are now developing will ensure action is taken to deliver reductions in pollution at the earliest possible date.

The Committee will wish to examine how the new plans map out the route to delivering these improvements. Whilst the plans must be delivered in partnership action with local communities, we expect the Government to demonstrate firm leadership to ensure effective delivery, including through sufficient funding. The levels of funding available are simply insufficient for local authorities to deliver a network of Clean Air Zones across the country in the dozens of cities that are likely to breach EU limits for many years to come.

In our April *Air quality* report, the Committee called for the Government to produce a strategy covering all pollutants, to update the one produced nearly a decade ago. In response, Defra relied on its plans for nitrogen dioxide only. Mr Hayes told us yesterday that it might now be time to develop that full strategy. We welcome his comments and seek assurances that Defra will prioritise the publication of a strategy that will focus not only on vehicle emissions of nitrogen dioxide, but that will deliver cuts in all pollutants, across all sectors.

Finally, we were concerned about the seeming inability of national and local government to ensure that shore-to-ship electricity connections are in place to prevent vessels running polluting engines in port. We were dismayed that different levels of government continue to blame each other for a failure to act.

We will expect full answers to these points during the Westminster Hall debate on our report tomorrow. It is essential that the public is reassured that the Government is not abrogating its responsibilities for tackling this public health emergency.

I am copying this letter to John Hayes.

Yours  
Neil Parish

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Neil Parish', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Neil Parish MP**  
Chairman of the Committee