



# Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee

Committee Office, House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA  
Tel 020 7219 3263/6194 Email efracom@parliament.uk Website www.parliament.uk

## From the Chairman of the Committee

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

25 April 2017

*Dear Secretary of State,*

### **Re: Air Quality**

As you know, my Committee has taken a close interest in air quality issues throughout this Parliament in light of the impact of air pollution on people's health and on the environment. Poor air quality contributes to the early deaths of more than 40,000 people in the UK each year. Urgent action is needed to cut levels of key emissions in pollution hot-spots to tackle this public health emergency.

Just last month the EFRA Committee, together with the Environmental Audit, Health, and Transport Committees, launched a joint inquiry into improving air quality following the High Court's requirement that the Government publish new plans for meeting legal limits on nitrogen dioxide. The High Court judgement was the second time that the UK courts had found against the Government over its failure to prepare adequate plans to tackle the high levels of pollution blighting urban communities.

The High Court set a deadline of yesterday, 24 April, for publication of the Government's draft plan for nitrogen dioxide. We were therefore very disappointed that, following the calling of the early General Election, you have proposed delaying publication until June.

This is an unacceptable delay, which would result in final plans not being produced until the Autumn. It is essential that the Government acts with all speed to finalise plans to cut emissions so as to protect the health of people living in polluted areas. Plans for Clean Air Zones across the UK must be put in place urgently to reduce levels of pollutants to not only meet legal levels but also to ensure that people are not exposed to unnecessary health risks.

Whilst work on the current Select Committees' joint inquiry has to end with the dissolution of this Parliament, we recommend that the Government's plans to improve air quality be considered as a high priority for our successor Committee's scrutiny in the next Parliament.

*Yours Sincerely  
Neil Parish*

**Neil Parish MP**  
**Chairman of the Committee**

**cc. Rt Hon John Hayes CBE MP, Minister of State, Department for Transport**