

Low Emissions Strategy for Exeter

Foreword

Welcome to the Exeter Low Emission Strategy (LES). This strategy is for 2015-2018 and is hopefully the first of a series of these strategies for our city.

The purpose of the LES is to reduce emissions from local traffic in Exeter. The emissions that we are concerned about are local pollutants that have a harmful effect on the health of the local population, as well as global pollutants such as carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gasses. We are all responsible for these emissions to some extent, by our personal travel choices, the goods we buy, and the work that we do.

The main local air pollutants of concern in Exeter are nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and particulates (PM). Particulate matter causes the greatest harm to people's health, but evidence for the effects of nitrogen dioxide is growing too. For example, the smallest particulates (PM_{2.5}) have been estimated to cause equivalent to 29,000 premature deaths per year in the UK. In Exeter the local figure is thought to be around 42 deaths per year¹. The young, the old and those with existing medical conditions will be the most affected. Other research has also suggested links between high levels of fine particles (PM_{2.5}) and lower school assessment grades for high-school age children, because of school absences and reduced productivity while learning at school².

Impacts on health of this scale inevitably have a significant effect on the population and the economy. Recent evidence² suggests that the scale of the effect may be greater than the impact of industrial disputes in terms of the number of absences from work, and greater than passive smoking or road traffic accidents in terms of the impact on life expectancy. The costs to the UK economy in 2010 were roughly 5% of GDP². The understanding of air quality costs and impacts is still developing and so care must be taken when quoting the effects listed above. Nevertheless, important implications for health, wellbeing and economic growth are starting to emerge².

This LES describes the steps that Exeter City Council, Devon County Council and their partners will take to reduce the impact of transport emissions and support sustainable development. To do this, we will work with all groups who travel or who generate traffic, including emissions from the council owned fleet and staff vehicles. We will also work to improve the understanding of air pollution as an issue and actively seek funding opportunities to implement stretched and innovative measures, especially opportunities to increase the use of ultra-low emission vehicles. The two Councils will evaluate the success of the strategy and use the lessons learned during the period 2015 to 2018 to develop a strategy for 2018 onwards.

We firmly believe that the successful implementation of the LES depends on the involvement of and consultation with businesses and local residents. Low transport emissions, and a vibrant growing economy are both seen as part of a sustainable future for Exeter, where cleaner vehicles, more efficient use of vehicles and reduced number of vehicles combine to reduce emissions and costs.

¹ Public Health England, PHE-CRCE-010: Estimating Local Mortality Burdens associated with Particulate Air Pollution 2014. <http://www.hpa.org.uk/Publications/Environment/PHECRCEReportSeries/PHECRCE010/>

² Natural Capital Committee (2015). The State of Natural Capital, Protecting and Improving Natural Capital for Prosperity and Wellbeing.