

Institute for Public Policy Research



ATMOSPHERE

**TOWARDS A PROPER
STRATEGY FOR TACKLING
GREATER MANCHESTER'S
AIR POLLUTION CRISIS**

"Walk in silence

*Don't walk away,
in silence*

See the danger

Always danger"

Joy Division

**Ed Cox and
Dom Goggins**

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SUMMARY

The levels of air pollution in Greater Manchester are lethal and illegal.

In groundbreaking new analysis, King's College London (KCL) has estimated that **1.6 million life years will be lost in Greater Manchester** in the coming century due to its poisonous air. This is equivalent to each of us having our life expectancy reduced by six months. Using the 2011 baseline, NO₂ pollution alone was estimated to have caused up to 1,781 premature deaths in Greater Manchester and particulate matter pollution up to 1,906 premature deaths.

Devolution allows the Greater Manchester mayor to take responsibility for this clean air agenda and do more, much more quickly, but national government must act urgently too to give the mayor the tools necessary to save lives and the **£1 billion annual cost to the Greater Manchester economy**.

KEY FINDINGS

While so much attention is given to air pollution in London, **Greater Manchester (GM) in fact has the highest rates of emergency admissions to hospital for asthma in the whole country** – Central Manchester and North Manchester NHS trusts have emergency admissions at double the national average. And evidence shows that the most vulnerable people and those living in disadvantaged areas are at greater risk from air pollution.

A recent World Health Organization (WHO) study shows **Manchester to be the second-worst council in England for PM₁₀ pollution** (London lies 22nd). Three out of five sites in Greater Manchester monitoring the more worrying PM_{2.5} pollution currently exceed WHO 'safe limits'.

The cost to the Greater Manchester economy is huge. The KCL study shows that air pollution is costing between £1 billion and £1.2 billion with every single local authority area affected.

Although government and the Greater Manchester combined authority recognises the general problem and is taking incremental steps to be legally compliant, **there is little recognition of the scale or urgency of Greater Manchester's crisis.**

Government modelling – based on just five monitoring sites for the whole city region – badly underestimates the extent of the problem and the prevalence of local hotspots. Greater Manchester's Clean Air Plan is focusing on a handful of congested road 'links', but **more extensive analysis shows a much wider problem across the whole city.**

Despite government predictions of a steady reduction in NO₂ emissions, local authority data shows **NO₂ levels in Greater Manchester are relatively static** with nine out of 10 Greater Manchester council areas having monitoring sites showing annual averages above legal limits of 40 micrograms per cubic metre (µg/m³) with some reaching over 65µg/m³.

There are also **notorious hotspots with staggering exceedances which are not captured by annual average figures.** At the Manchester Oxford Road monitoring station, levels of 200µg/m³ were exceeded no fewer than 90 times during 2016.