

---

# Final Ministerial Reply



\*FR050\*

---

**Case Number**

**Date Scanned**



**Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs**

Nobel House  
17 Smith Square  
London SW1P 3JR

T 08459 335577  
helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk  
www.gov.uk/defra

Boris Johnson  
Mayor of London  
City Hall  
LONDON  
SE1 2AA

Ref: PO341526

April 2014

**The Rt Hon Owen Paterson MP**  
From the Secretary of State

Thank you for your letter of 4 March in response to the European Commission proceedings relating to non-compliance with nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) levels.

I share your disappointment at the decision of the Commission to proceed against the UK at this stage. I also agree that the Commission needs to recognise its share of responsibility for both the Euro standards not delivering as expected and the support for diesel that have played a large part in continuing air quality issues across the UK.

Your letter outlined the significant steps you are taking to improve air quality across London and these are much appreciated and supported by my Department. The proposed Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) is very ambitious and I want to work closely with you on this as plans develop. I would be very interested to see your projections for the potential reduction in emissions and associated concentrations that could result.

Many of the proposals you make in response to the NO<sub>2</sub> infraction highlight the importance of a joint approach nationally and locally to develop a suite of measures to bring the UK into compliance with the EU limit values. I have asked my officials to take these into consideration in the development of plans and also in discussions with other departments.

On Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEVs); these form a central plank of this Government's strategy for improving air quality and since 2010, in the region of £1 billion has been committed to promoting ULEVs. The Office for Low Emission Vehicles (OLEV) is currently considering how to best apply this investment over the next five years to achieve growth in this market and secure UK jobs, as well as meet our air quality obligations. I note that you have written to Patrick McLoughlin regarding this. In addition to ULEVs, the Government has provided £100 million to support cycling and walking as sustainable transport alternatives. It has also invested over £100 million in greener and cleaner bus technologies.



**INVESTORS  
IN PEOPLE**

Whilst transport forms a significant part of the challenge on NO<sub>2</sub>, I agree we should seek to reduce emissions from other sources where possible, especially where it supports carbon emission targets such as on energy efficiency. I have asked officials to consider these in discussions with other Departments including DECC. Similarly following our Call for Evidence on the Clean Air Act we will shortly be setting out our response to that and next steps to modernise this historic legislation.

As you pointed out, local authorities also play an important role in improving air quality and I am interested in your ideas there to strengthen the focus on action planning. London Boroughs have many fine examples of local interventions. It would be good to promote these more widely and share good practice with other authorities that face challenges in meeting air quality limits. Our own review of Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) identified support for more concerted and coordinated action at local level. I am sure you would agree that this is needed if we are to move effectively towards compliance. We must keep in contact as this work develops.

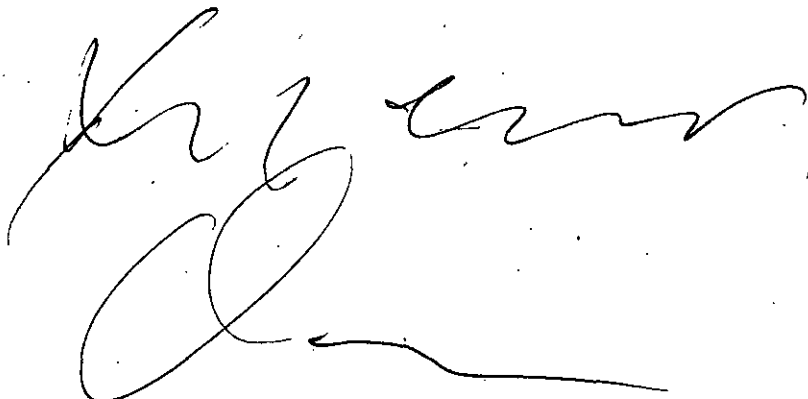
Officials and special advisers from DfT, OLEV and Defra recently met with your Deputy Mayors for Transport and for the Environment to discuss what actions we could take together and how to respond to the challenge presented by this infraction. That meeting was very productive and demonstrated the importance of a joint narrative in responding to the EU. This joint narrative is being developed with your officials and I am also grateful for the support we have received in responding to the European Commission's infraction letter. I am keen to continue this joint working to develop a coordinated approach over the coming months.

Providing targeted and effective advice on reducing individual exposure to air pollution is also an important area of work and can help to support stronger action on air quality. We are working with the Department of Health following the inclusion of the public health indicator on air quality in the public health outcome framework. We also already provide a comprehensive forecasting and health advice service and as part of our communications work we will be looking at how to best promote this service, making full use of digital media. This was done to some effect in the recent air pollution episode and there are lessons we can learn from that to ensure messages on health advice are cascaded effectively through public health and local authority networks. Your support on this would be greatly appreciated.

The focus we need to give to communications was also raised at a recent air quality ministerial roundtable in my Department and we are giving priority to this as a part of taking our work forward. Regarding your comments on Horn Lane, whilst our most significant compliance challenge remains NO<sub>2</sub>, we are very aware that particulate matter (PM) continues to have significant health impacts. We will be looking at what measures are needed to ensure we reduce levels of this pollutant as well.



I am grateful for your support on this matter and also for the considerable action and commitment you and London are taking to improve air quality. We recognise that more action is needed and I look forward to continuing to work closely with you and colleagues across wider Government and local authorities on what more we can all do to improve air quality, safeguard human health and meet EU air quality standards.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Owen Paterson', written in a cursive style.

**THE RT HON OWEN PATERSON MP**