

Media Release

LINK resigns from Cleaner Air for Scotland Governance Group

Scottish Environment LINK have resigned from the Cleaner Air for Scotland Governance Group (CAFSGG), citing their disappointment in and frustration around the Group's lack of progress in tackling unsafe levels of air pollution, and poor input into Glasgow's draft Low Emission Zone plans as key reasons.

The CAFSGG oversees the delivery of the Scottish Government's Air Quality Strategy which promised legally compliant air by 2020. Friends of the Earth Scotland's Air Pollution Campaigner Emilia Hanna and Scottish Environment LINK Honorary Fellow Professor James Curran MBE represented LINK on the Group.

LINK's [letter](#) of resignation said,

"For two years the LINK representatives have made every constructive effort to inject ambition and urgency into the creation of Low Emission Zones in Scotland. At nearly every single stage they have felt frustrated by lack of progress."

Commenting on LINK's resignation, Professor James Curran MBE said:

"We had no alternative but to resign. For two years we made every effort to inject ambition and urgency into the creation of the first LEZ. In the end we're deeply disappointed.

"Recently Scottish Government created an ambitious, strategic and tightly managed national system to tackle flood risk – and now funds it with over £40M per year. Sadly there is no similar determination to tackle air pollution which is directly causing thousands of premature deaths.

"The High Court ordered that air pollution problems must be fixed as fast as possible and that cost can't be used as an excuse. When thousands of people, particularly from deprived communities, are exposed unknowingly to toxic fumes then Government must force vested interests to act – to act responsibly and to act immediately.

Air Pollution Campaigner for Friends of the Earth Scotland Emilia Hanna said:

"Air pollution has an enormous death toll in Scotland, with over 2500 people dying early from toxic fumes every year. Getting the policies right to tackle air pollution is literally a matter of life and death, but there was very little sense of urgency on the Cleaner Air for Scotland Governance Group. It took the group months to take on the task of delivering Low Emission Zones after they were made a ministerial commitment. There has been a culture of denial on the group, with members keen to ensure we spoke only about 'poor air quality' than 'air pollution'. Denialism, apathy and foot dragging on the group has meant missed opportunities and unnecessary loss of life from prolonged air pollution. To stay on the group would be to compromise the integrity of Scottish Environment LINK.

"For two years we have tried to help the group move beyond a collective unwillingness to tackle air pollution head on. The lack of actual facts on bus numbers, available finance and legal options that has informed Glasgow LEZ plans has been the final straw and we feel that we can be more effective in achieving clean air outside of the group.

“It is vital that the Glasgow LEZ tackles cars, vans, lorries, and taxis as well as just buses, because we know that a bus-only LEZ would fail to deliver all the necessary improvements in air quality required to achieve clean air. But the group ignored our calls to build evidence for and around a wide reaching LEZ and as a result, the original Glasgow plan was unacceptably timid. Given that the target for the first year of operation is nothing more than would have happened anyway, the LEZ is going to have little impact on the 300 deaths from air pollution in Glasgow predicted for 2019.”

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Notes for Editors

1. This story was revealed exclusively by the Sunday Times on 25 March 2018.
2. A copy of Scottish Environment LINK’s full letter of resignation can be viewed on our website [here](#)
3. Recent “Glasgow No Ambition Zone” pictures are available for use at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/friendsoftheearthscotland/39110187260/in/album-72157693946435034>.
4. Cleaner Air for Scotland is the Strategy on air quality which in which the Scottish Government commits itself to having legally compliant air quality by 2020, with a range of policy actions intended to deliver this. <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0048/00488493.pdf>. The Governance Group has been set up to support its work and has a range of members, including (but not limited to) representatives from Transport Scotland, the Scottish Government’s Air Quality Division, SEPA, Health Protection Scotland, local authority representatives, and until now, Scottish Environment LINK. It was tasked with delivering some of the aspects of LEZ work, but LEZ work was recently outsourced to LEZ delivery groups.
5. Glasgow City Council’s draft LEZ plans were recently dubbed a “No Ambition Zone” due to being unambitious. 8 organisations – LINK, Friends of the Earth Scotland, WWF Scotland, Glasgow GoBike, Get Glasgow Moving, Cycling UK Scotland, Stop Climate Chaos Scotland and Global Justice Now wrote to Glasgow City Council’s Environment Committee last week urging the plans to be dramatically improved. Their letter can be viewed at <https://foe.scot/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/LEZ-ambition-19-March-ENV-Comm-final-updated-signatory-list.pdf>. The draft plans were improved at the Environment Committee.
6. Scottish Environment LINK is the forum for Scotland’s voluntary environment organisations, with over 35 member bodies representing a range of environmental interests with the common goal of contributing to a more environmentally sustainable society: <http://www.scotlink.org/>
7. Professor James Curran MBE has a long-standing concern about climate change, reflected in his career, and was awarded MBE for services to environment and sustainability: <http://www.scotlink.org/about/board/>
8. Friends of the Earth Scotland is
 - * Scotland’s leading environmental campaigning organisation
 - * An independent Scottish charity with a network of thousands of supporters and active local groups across Scotland
 - * Part of the largest grassroots environmental network in the world, uniting over 2 million supporters, 75 national member groups, and some 5,000 local activist groups.www.foe.scot

LINK is a Scottish Charity (SC000296) and a Scottish Company Limited by guarantee (SC250899). LINK is core funded by Membership Subscriptions and by grants from Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Government and Charitable Trusts.

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