

Budget briefing for parliamentarians

March 2020



The case for environmental health

The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) is the professional voice for environmental health representing over 7,300 members across the UK working in the public, private and third sectors.

Environmental health has an important and unique contribution to make to improving public health, reducing health inequalities, and protecting our environment. From tackling air quality, fighting for better housing conditions, and making sure the food we eat is safe, environmental health practitioners (EHPs) are a vital element in our society.

This budget, we are calling on the Chancellor of the Exchequer to recognise the vital role environmental health plays in all our lives and address key housing, food and environmental issues.

If you require any further information, please contact **Ross Matthewman**,
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Bringing up energy efficiency of cold homes

There were 50,000 excess winter deaths in 2017/18 in England¹ and cold homes are directly responsible for around a third of these.² More than 2.5 million people in England are currently living in fuel poverty and around 1 million homes are languishing in the two lowest energy efficiency bands – F and G.³

Across the UK, homes also account for 14% of total carbon emissions.⁴ By committing greater investment and incentives for energy efficiency in our homes right now, the Government could help to reduce unnecessary NHS costs and make greater progress towards the 2050 carbon net zero target.

Government funding should be added to the contributions being made by landlords and Energy Company Obligation funding in order to speed up improvement. This investment should be targeted at the homes of households living in fuel poverty and homes with the lowest energy efficiency ratings. Financial and other incentives for homeowners should also be provided by the Government to speed up investment in energy efficiency by owner occupiers.

Finally, we want to see the introduction of minimum standards for Homes in Multiple Occupation along with higher energy efficiency standards across the private rented sector.

Office for Environmental Protection

Now that the UK has left the European Union, we need to see the Environment Bill establish a truly independent Office for Environmental Protection with the necessary powers and resources to hold the Government to its environmental commitments. The Chancellor must commit the appropriate funding to ensure that this is the case.

This body has a crucial role to play with regards to air quality and other environmental protection laws. Good air quality is a basic requirement and determinant of human health. In the UK, 671 Air Quality Management Areas exist where pollutant levels exceed EU legal limits.⁵ Some of these limits are set at twice the World Health Organisation (WHO) acceptable levels.⁶

We would like to see post-Brexit air quality limits, which are legally binding and in line with World Health Organisation guidelines to protect public health.

Sharing responsibility for air pollution

Whilst it is positive to see six Government departments collaborating on the latest Clean Air Strategy, published earlier this year, we would like to see responsibilities for air quality extended to other agencies and bodies. Transport, highways and rail network agencies need specific targets and incentives to reduce emissions and improve air quality.

Similarly, local agencies and authorities should collaborate and share duties around the reduction of harmful pollution, whilst local planning departments should have a statutory duty to consider the impact of air quality from proposed new developments.

It is essential that the Chancellor provides the necessary resources to local authorities to allow them to play the role the Government envisages for them in helping the UK meet our environmental targets. Otherwise, we will simply see further strain placed on already stretched local resources.

UK-wide measures to reduce transport emissions

Road transport is the most common reason for the introduction of Air Quality Management Areas across the UK, from Northern Ireland to London.⁷ Reducing road transport emissions is therefore vital to reducing the impact of air pollution on human health.

We are calling on the Chancellor to take a UK-wide approach to reducing emissions from road transport, including by bringing forward the ban on the sales of new diesel and petrol cars to 2030, setting up a reliable vehicle labelling scheme to help consumers to choose the cleanest vehicles and introducing obligations on vehicle manufacturers to retrofit or compensate consumers for the Euro 5 and 6 diesel powered vehicles, which did not meet their own standards.⁸

Decarbonising our economy

The Government's commitment to reduce our carbon emissions and achieve net-zero by 2050 is an ambitious target. However, this target should be reached as quickly as possible if we are to reduce the risks of lasting environmental damage.

We are calling on the Chancellor to focus funding on initiatives which align with the ambitious goal of meeting net zero by 2050. This should be done across all aspects of our daily lives, including housing, transport, and environment, that encourages sustainability and carbon reductions. There should also be a new overarching goal to consider climate change as part of all central and local government decisions and policies.

Food sampling

Food sampling is a vital source of intelligence for local authorities and the Food Standards Agency. Sampling enhances our understanding of food risks and provides a basis for enforcement action to combat food fraud. The Food Law Code of Practice states that routine sampling is an essential part of a well-balanced enforcement services.⁹

However, between 2012-13 and 2018-19, the level of sampling fell by 38%, and in 2018-19, 21 English local authorities did not carry out any sampling.^{10,11} The FSA ceased its coordinated national food standards sampling programme in 2017/18, in which it had previously invested £9.5 million.¹²

We urge the Chancellor to reinstate support to local authorities for food sampling and ensure there is sufficient funding for food sampling at a local level.

Getting in touch

We would be delighted to hear from you and work with you going forwards, so please do get in touch with our Head of Policy and Campaign, Ross Matthewman:

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References

- 1 Excess winter mortality in England and Wales: 2017 to 2018 (provisional) and 2016 to 2017 (final), ONS, published Nov 2018.
- 2 <https://www.e3g.org/news/media-room/17000-people-in-the-uk-died-last-winter-due-to-cold-housing>
- 3 Data extracted from English housing survey – 2018/19, ONS, published 2019. (Actual figure: 1,038,000 from AT2.7).
- 4 UK Housing: Fit for the future? Committee on Climate Change, Feb 2019.
- 5 PM10 annual average concentration set at 40µg/m³ in the Air Quality (England) Regulations 2000 (SI 928), The Air Quality (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2002 (SI 3043). <https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/aqma/summary>
- 6 PM10 annual average concentration set at 20µg/m³ in “WHO Air quality guidelines for particulate matter, ozone, nitrogen dioxide and sulfur dioxide; Global update 2005: Summary of risk assessment”.
- 7 <https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/aqma/summary> accessed on 26 June 2019.
- 8 <https://www.ft.com/content/9d052960-6903-11e8-b6eb-4acfcfb08c11>
- 9 Food Law Code of Practice for England, FSA, 2017. <https://signin.riams.org/connect/revision/zmi2z/Environmental-Health/Food-Law-Code-of-Practice-England>
- 10 Annual report on local authority food law enforcement. For England, Northern Ireland and Wales, FSA, 2013.
- 11 Annual report on local authority food law enforcement. For England, Northern Ireland and Wales, FSA, 2019.
- 12 Ibid.