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Lockdown in London sees pollution halved at commuter hotspots – *with 73% of Londoners saying they are happier not having to deal with rush hour*

- *New research shows air pollution at commuter hotspots fell 30% on average during lockdown*
- *Busiest areas saw a 50% reduction during rush hour*
- *Londoners are keen for pollution levels to remain low as capital emerges from lockdown*

[2nd July 2020] New research by Environmental Defense Fund Europe (EDFE) and Global Action Plan has found that three commuter hotspots in London, such as Borough High Street, have shown an average decrease in nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) of 30% compared to 9-17% across Greater London. Additionally, these busy areas saw up to 50% drops in pollution during rush hours.

EDFE analysed pollution data from the Breathe London monitoring network during morning (8-11am) and evening (5-8pm) commuting hours in the first four weeks of lockdown, finding reductions of:

- **Borough High Street**, at the base of London Bridge: **37% morning** and **47% evening**
- **Cowcross Street**, near Farringdon Train Station: **38% morning** and **43% evening**
- **South Street**, adjacent to the major transport thoroughfare of Park Lane: **32% morning** and **50% evening**

These three sites were also in the top five of overall NO₂ pollution reduction locations for the Breathe London network. NO₂ is a toxic pollutant produced when fossil fuels such as diesel, petrol or natural gas are burned.

In order to keep air pollution down, particularly during rush hour, Global Action Plan is calling on businesses to offer remote working to employees to ease pressure during peak travel times.

Additional research also shows that Londoners are more concerned about the air pollution since lockdown and are keen for it to stay low. A recent survey by Global Action Plan, commissioned by urban health foundation Guy's and St Thomas' Charity, finds:

- **72%** of Londoners noticed cleaner air during lockdown
- **70%** of Londoners want government and local authorities to tackle air pollution and traffic more urgently than before the coronavirus outbreak
- **40%** of Londoners are more concerned about air pollution since the coronavirus outbreak
- **80%** of Londoners would like to work remotely after lockdown to some extent
- **73%** of Londoners are happier not dealing with rush hour

As part of Global Action Plan's call for continued remote working through the Build Back Cleaner Air project with Guy's and St. Thomas's Charity, they are helping businesses emerge safely and

sustainably from the coronavirus pandemic. The project is offering businesses free support through the **Business for Clean Air Initiative** which launched on June 24th. It's the UK's first free initiative to help businesses prioritise the most impactful ways to cut air pollution and make a green recovery post lockdown. Companies can sign up for free, here: <https://bit.ly/2V44hpl>

Shirley Rodrigues, Deputy Mayor for Environment and Energy, says: *"Toxic air contributes to thousands of premature deaths in London every year and there is emerging evidence linking air pollution with an increased vulnerability to COVID-19. The Mayor has taken bold action with measures such as the world's first Ultra Low Emission Zone and Low Emission Bus Zones, and they are already transforming the air we breathe.*

"London's recovery from this pandemic must be a green, fair and prosperous one, and it's clear that Londoners agree. Our challenge is to eradicate air pollution permanently and ensure the gains we've made through policies such as ULEZ continue. The Mayor's new Streetspace programme is fast-tracking the transformation of streets across our city to enable many more people to walk and cycle. By making the right choices we can all play a part in tackling our air pollution crisis."

Chris Large, Co-CEO at Global Action Plan, says: *"These findings are clear: air pollution clears up rapidly when we stop driving polluting vehicles. Children in some London boroughs average 10% smaller lungs than the UK average, and this stunting stays for life. Businesses can end this disadvantage to London's inner-city children by committing to tackling air pollution".*

Oliver Lord, Head of Policy and Campaigns, EDFE says: *"Last year, the Breathe London network recorded seriously elevated levels of nitrogen dioxide pollution at some of the busiest commuter areas during rush hour. Lockdown has made a huge difference and shown how much it is in our hands to build back better."*

Kate Langford, Programme Director, Health Effects of Air Pollution, Guy's and St Thomas' Charity, says: *"We know that air pollution disproportionately impacts some people's health more than others, including children and people with long-term conditions. There is also emerging evidence that COVID-19 leads to long-term lung damage and the groups disproportionality impacted by the virus are likely to be affected by air pollution as their lungs recover. This research makes clear that Londoners want the cleaner air and safer streets they have experienced in the last few months to remain, and that all parts of society including employers and businesses have a part to play in making the cities we live in healthier."*

Notes to Editors

**Global Action Plan is working in partnership with urban health foundation Guy's and St Thomas' Charity using Lambeth & Southwark as test bed boroughs for ongoing research. Guy's and St Thomas' Charity is an independent foundation as well as the hospital charity for Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust.*

All metrics here calculated by comparing mean NO₂ levels during a pre-confinement period (Dec 1st 2019 – Feb 29th 2020, with the exception of Christmas Day, Boxing Day, New Year's Eve and New Year's Day) to the first four weeks of confinement (March 17th 2020 – April 14th 2020).

The Breathe London 'Borough High Street' monitor is located at the intersection of Tooley Street and Borough High Street. Essential works on London Bridge began 16th March and the [accompanying traffic restrictions](#) may have impacted both the mix of vehicles and levels of traffic near the monitoring site at Borough High Street. The reduction observed at Borough High Street could be a combined result of traffic restrictions and COVID-19 restrictions.

The locations of the monitors and more information can be found on the [Breathe London website](#).