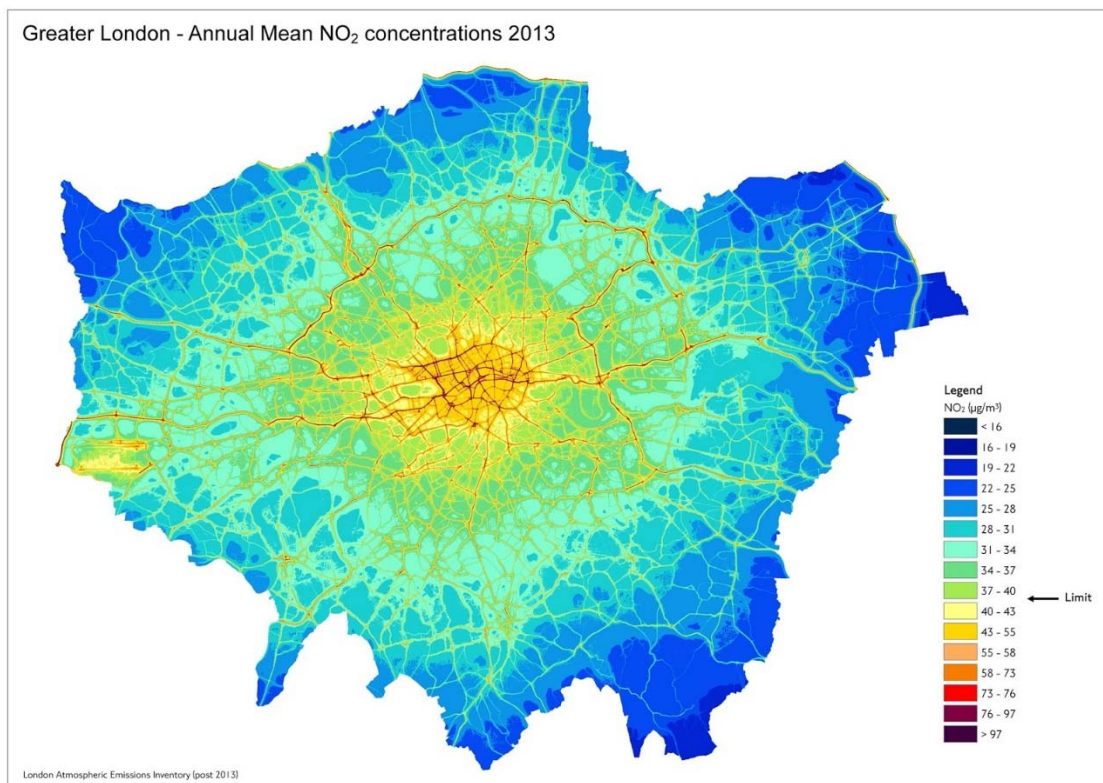


Air Quality and the ULEZ – It’s a Vindictive but Unjustified Measure

This article is by James Hockney who is a Councillor in the London Borough of Enfield and represents the Bush Hill Park ward. He was the Conservatives Parliamentary Candidate for the Edmonton constituency at the last General Election.

We all want better air quality, right? Well, I have good news for you. It is getting better.

This map from 2013 shows almost all of London outside the Central London Congestion Charge area with emissions within safe levels. Main trunk roads routes and major junctions, plus Heathrow, are the exceptions.



However, this map is seven years old and the situation has improved.

In the latest report on Air Quality from [Aether UK](#), which dates from 2017, it was estimated that almost all the areas identified as having dangerous levels of pollution in a study in 2010, now had safe levels of air quality. TfL’s own figures show a steady fall in emissions of NOx and this is predicted to continue.

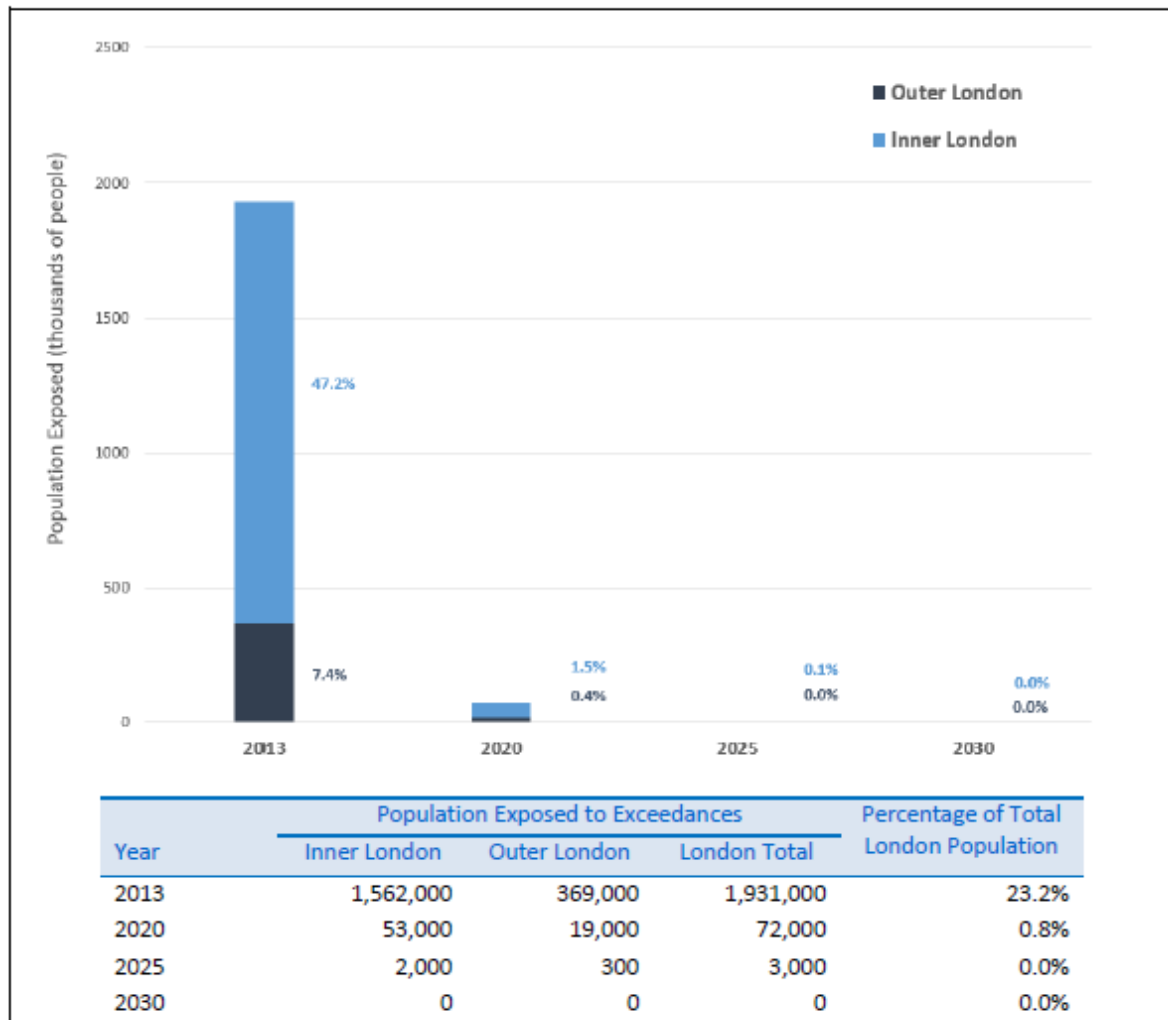
There are a number of reasons for this. European Union legislation has been requiring lower emissions from vehicles for more than two decades. The latest standards are deemed acceptable, even in the new Ultra Low Emission Zone in Central London. Heavier vehicles have also been subject to the “Low Emission Zone” - which covers almost all of London - since 2008. A Ken Livingstone policy; implemented by Boris Johnson.

Car use has also fallen dramatically, with journeys to work by car or motorcycle in London halving from almost 154m a year in 2000 to just over 70m a year in 2017. Cycling in the same period has almost quadrupled from 11m to 40m and public transport use has increased from 260m journeys to 330m.

So, are further measures justified?

This chart from the Aether UK report suggests not:

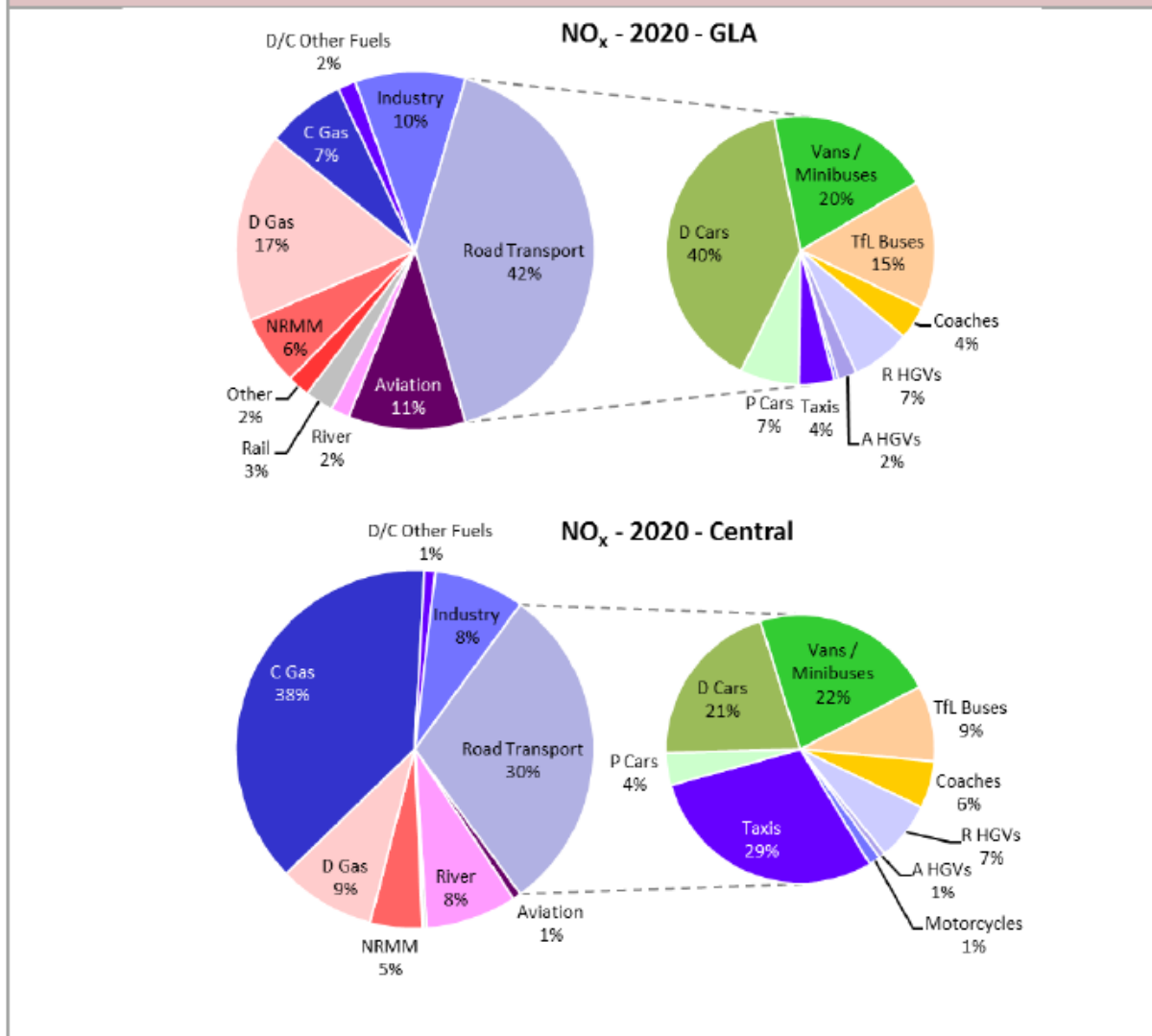
Figure 2 Estimate of population exposed to NO₂ concentrations in exceedance of the EU Air Quality Objective (40 µg/m³) for 2013, 2025, 2025 and 2030



Already, it is estimated that fewer than 1% of Londoners are exposed to air quality above the safe level. This is attributed to earlier tightening of vehicle standards and modal shift away from cars, trends that are continuing.

Lastly, whilst it is an emotive issue - and whenever one of those poorly maintained vans drives past you with its exhaust belching sooty black smoke, a very visible and noxious one - the focus on vehicles is perhaps missing the point. Again, TfL's own reports show that domestic and commercial gas heating is the source of almost one quarter of all NOx emissions and almost half of those in Central London. Interestingly, at the time of the consultation on expanding the ULEZ, the figures for all of London showed road transport responsible for 51% of all emissions. This suggests they have fallen by a quarter in the last seven years.

Figure 18: Comparative NO_x emissions by source for 2020 – Greater London and central London compared²⁰



When it comes to particulate emissions the story is similar. Tightening standards have cut PM10 particulate emission from vehicles by almost 95% and PM2.5 emissions have fallen by 75%. It is also unlikely that the ULEZ will cut particulate emissions very much anyway, as the majority of particulates come from brake and tyre wear and the “re-suspension” of those particles. Switching to electric vehicles isn’t going to help with that as they still need to steer and stop.

Total UK PM_{2.5} Emissions (kt), 1990-2009, 2015 and 2020

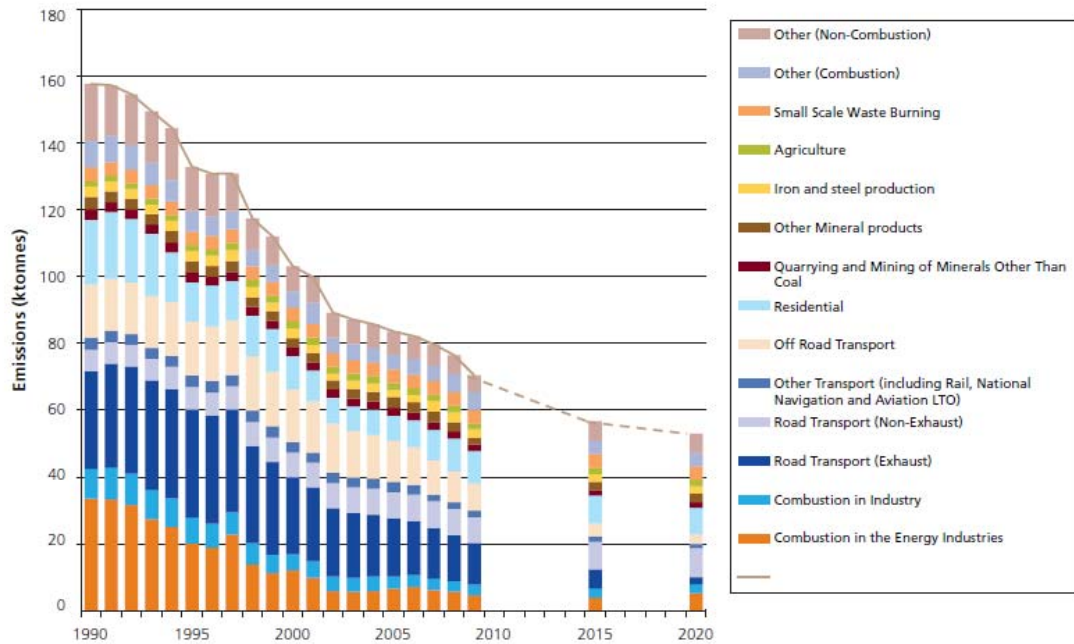


Figure 4.1: UK emissions of primary PM_{2.5} from different sources from 1990-2009 and projected to 2020 according to the NAEI (Passant *et al.*, 2011). The projections are based on assumptions about future levels of activities and changes in emission factors according to current legislation (Wagner, 2010).

This rather makes the very marginal benefit of extending the central London ULEZ out to the A406/A205 boundary appear to be a vindictive measure, not one driven by evidence. There is a very marginal early benefit, coming from an assumption that it will bring forward decisions to change vehicles, but by 2030, emissions are predicted to be at exactly the same level with or without the scheme.

Sadly for some people that is not going to be an option. The high-mileage company car will get changed. But if you are an elderly couple with limited cash and a fixed pension income, changing a car you probably bought expecting it to see you out, is probably not an option. So, they will pay £12.50 to drive to their local hospital. And that just doesn't seem fair.

It also seems unfair that the motorist is demonised as the polluter when they have done more than anybody else in the past twenty years to improve air quality.

The expansion of ULEZ is part of a concerted attack on motorists and driving. At the same time, Councils are pushing ahead with projects like re-building the Edmonton incinerator. This project alone will emit more than 10% of the likely emissions from all the non-exempt vehicles currently driving in London. And it will generate extra traffic on the A406 as it needs to bring waste in from a far wider area than the seven partner Boroughs which form the North London Waste Authority. It is by rethinking projects like the Edmonton incinerator and by focussing on reducing our reliance on gas for domestic and commercial heating and cooking where those gains will need to come from.

If you want to help stop the expansion of the zone, please sign the petition at www.stopulez.com , share this message with your friends, family and work colleagues and consider donating to help support more adverts around London to raise awareness.

06/07/2020

www.freedomfordrivers.org and www.abd.org.uk