



Department
for Transport

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From the Parliamentary
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Dear Barry,

Thank you for your letter of 23 March regarding testing at MOT and national air pollution.

I understand your concerns regarding the increased levels of air pollution that arise from faulty diesel particulate filters (DPFs). As you will be aware from recent responses to your Parliamentary questions and a letter from Baroness Vere, checks for the proper functioning of DPFs already form part of the MOT test and are explicitly mentioned as an item to be checked in the MOT inspection manual. We already have safeguards in operation. Where emission control equipment fitted by the manufacturer is missing, obviously modified, or obviously defective, the vehicle should receive a "Major" failure and not pass the MOT test.

Furthermore, it is already an offence under the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations (Regulation 61a(3)) to use a vehicle which has been modified in such a way that it no longer complies with the air pollutant emissions standards it was designed to meet. Removal of a DPF will almost invariably contravene these requirements, making the vehicle illegal for road use. The potential penalties for failing to comply with Regulation 61a are significant, with fines of up to £1,000 for a car or £2,500 for a light goods vehicle.

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) also takes emissions control very seriously. Their Market Surveillance Unit achieved recent success in court with a successful prosecution against a manufacturer for selling a DPF which failed to comply with regulations. This action sends a clear message to parts manufacturers and distributors that they must sell type approved products in line with the law or face prosecution.

The Department for Transport is aware of work being undertaken in Europe on emissions testing. We recently carried out research to assess whether new measurement equipment could be used to improve the assessment of emissions during the MOT test and roadside checks.

This included equipment for detection of removed or damaged DPFs. Once this research is published, the results will be considered for any future changes to the MOT test.

Your letter also asks how we are improving roadside air pollution and protecting people and their health. Air pollution has reduced significantly since 2010 – emissions of nitrogen oxides have fallen by 32% and are at their lowest level since records began. But we know that there is more to do and we have put in place a £3.8 billion plan to improve air quality and deliver cleaner transport. We are providing £880 million to help local authorities to develop and implement their local air quality plans and to support those impacted by these plans.

We have instructed 61 local authorities specifically to develop and implement measures to address their Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) exceedances in the shortest possible time. Due to the highly localised nature of the problem, local knowledge is crucial in solving pollution problems in these hotspots. The Government is taking a strong national leadership role by providing financial and expert support to these local authorities to develop their innovative plans.

One of the solutions to address the highest levels of exceedances has been to introduce Clean Air Zones (CAZ). Bath implemented their CAZ on 15 March 2021, with more to follow. Birmingham will launch a CAZ on 1 June this year. We are working with Bristol, Tyneside, Sheffield, Bradford, Greater Manchester and Portsmouth to firm up the implementation dates of their CAZs. We expect these to go live later this year or in the first part of 2022, with Liverpool's CAZ expected the following year.

In addition to the above, we are also taking a more holistic approach towards improving air quality. This includes progressing with banning the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2030, ten years earlier than planned and, from 2035, all new cars and vans must be zero emissions at the tailpipe, and the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy which aims to increase cycling and walking and make our roads safer for vulnerable users.

Yours sincerely,



RACHEL MACLEAN

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT