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Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer
HM Treasury
The Correspondence and Enquiry Unit
1 Horse Guards Road
SW1A 2HQ London

Dear Chancellor of the Exchequer,

A National Diesel Scrappage Fund is needed to tackle poor air quality

Local authorities across the country are doing what they can to tackle air pollution, but it is essential that the government takes a stronger role in leading the efforts. Around 40,000 deaths each year in the UK are attributable to air pollution and it incurs £20bn in health costs annually. Despite taking steps to address the challenge 278 of 391 local authorities (71%) missed their air quality targets last year, which demonstrates that air pollution is a national issue, not just a local one. While the Mayor of London is working hard to tackle the issue of air pollution in the capital, such as introducing the T-Charge and bringing forward the introduction of an Ultra Low Emission Zone, there is a distinct role for national government in this area.

Ultimately there needs to be a stronger incentive to remove polluting vehicles from the nation's roads. In Southwark, diesel accounts for 91% of the total NO_x emissions in the borough and 58% of the total PM₁₀. Southwark Council firmly supports the Mayor of London's proposal to government to introduce a National Diesel Scrappage Fund. This would help to encourage a change from polluting vehicles and increase usage of public transport. It would also ensure that families on lower incomes are not adversely affected by measures introduced to tackle air pollution.

In the upcoming Autumn Budget, there is a great potential for government to show leadership in tackling one of the biggest environmental challenges facing the country, and implement a national fund to remove polluting vehicles from the street. The proposed National Diesel Scrappage Fund improves on previous scrappage schemes and looks to provide additional support to small businesses, charities, schools, and low income households, as well as further incentivising the scrappage of polluting taxis. The approach, based on calculations in London, would cover over 3.8 million people and achieve a 40% reduction in road transport NO_x emissions. If rolled out across the country, the fund could have a meaningful, immediate impact on improving air quality across the UK.

I urge the government to introduce the fund alongside a reform to Vehicle Excise Duty and a new Clean Air Act that is suitable for the 21st century. Implementing these actions would compliment work being done by local authorities and improve air quality in urban areas that are significantly affected by pollution.

Southwark Council and other local authorities across the country are taking ambitious steps to tackle the issue, but a national scrappage fund would help level the playing field and ensure that no one is adversely affected by the necessary shift to less polluting vehicles.

Considering the importance of this issue and the cross departmental implications of the proposal, this letter has also been sent to your colleagues the Secretary of State for Transport, Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP, and Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Rt Hon Michael Gove MP.

Yours sincerely,

CLlr Maisie Anderson
Cabinet Member for Public Health & Social Regeneration

Copied to Rt Hon Michael Gove MP and Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP