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For Immediate Release

Brighton & Hove's low emission zone starts

Brighton & Hove's first low emission zone (LEZ), which covers Castle Square, North Street and Western Road as far as Palmeira Square, has begun.

From this week, the majority of buses entering the city centre zone will meet minimum emission standards.

The aim of the zone is to improve air quality by reducing levels of nitrogen dioxide which in some areas are double the European and English legal limits. Although the LEZ area is small, almost 98% of bus movements in the city pass through the zone, extending the benefits of cleaner buses and taxis throughout the city.

Councillor Ian Davey, lead member for transport at Brighton & Hove City Council, said: "Poor levels of air quality as a result of transport emissions have been a stubborn problem in some areas for more than 20 years. Positive joint working with bus and taxi operators has led to external funding and a strong commitment to a low emission zone for Brighton & Hove. We're delighted this is now a reality and it is something we will be building on."

Brighton & Hove's LEZ came about following constructive discussions with all the city's bus operators and the taxi forum on ways in which poor air quality can be tackled in a practical way.

All bus operators large and small - including Brighton and Hove Buses - are playing their part in making public transport cleaner.

Cuckmere Buses, a small company made up of volunteers, has spent £90,000 on a Euro V sprinter and Metrobus is replacing four buses to Euro V1 in March. Stagecoach has invested over £2m with 12 Euro V buses which are now being used on the 700 route.

Philip Ayers, MD of Cuckmere Buses, said: "We are delighted to be part of this exciting plan to improve air quality in the city, and are looking to invest further in new clean engine minibuses to extend that to other areas where we operate. Our

company has a turnover of just over £200,000 a year, so each new bus represents a huge commitment for us. Our fleet is already 100% low floor easy access and this is the latest step in our 40 year journey to provide bus services for people where commercial operators can no longer afford to operate."

Brighton and Hove Buses is in the process of retrofitting 50 buses to better than Euro V standard and buying a further 24 new Euro V1 buses in the spring. Martin Harris, MD for the company, said: "Our buses will continue to provide the backbone of the public transport system for the city for many years to come, and with a fleet of almost 300 buses operating in compliance with the requirements of the new LEZ, we will do so in ways that continue to balance the needs of bus users and the wider needs of the whole community."

Taxis are not covered by the LEZ conditions but drivers are voluntarily observing 'no engine idling' policies whilst stationary at taxi ranks. A successful joint bid with Brighton & Hove City Council also means that a minimum of 25 vehicles will be installed with cleaner exhaust technology.

Jon Andersson, from Ricardo, which has carried out research into understanding real-world exhaust emissions in Brighton, said: "Ricardo is pleased to have been able to provide its vehicle emissions research expertise and knowledge of the latest thinking in clean technology to the council and bus operators so that they can better understand the underlying issues and their potential solutions."

The amount of pollution at street level is affected by a number of factors, including the position of buildings, street gradients and the way traffic flows. There can be a huge difference in concentrations within a small area – for example Pavilion Gardens has low concentrations compared to North Street a short distance away. So, as well as encouraging low emission vehicles the council is looking at managing construction traffic, reducing pollution dose and exposure, green planting and optimising traffic light signalling to address the problem.

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