



Esslingen, Germany: 23rd - 29th November 2017

Project Title: Work in Progress - Students managing public relations projects

Debating Topic: "How to make our cities more breathable"

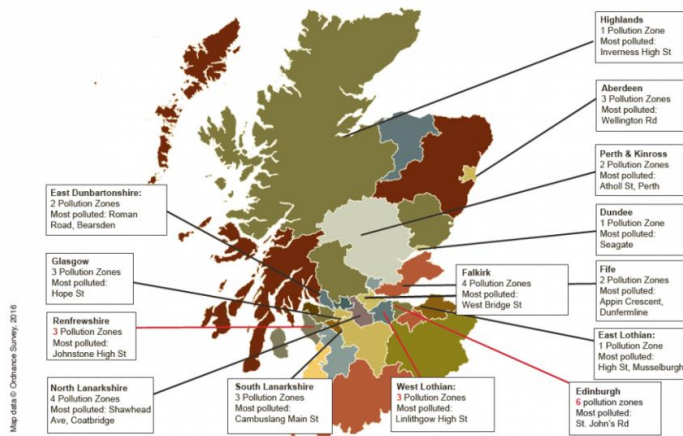
Contributions from students at *Peebles High School*

Question 1

Is air pollution in towns in your country an issue / a matter of public concern?

Air pollution is an issue in every country. In Scotland, there are now 38 zones where safety standards for air quality are regularly broken, a rise of five since last year. The potential impact of this on public health is well known, particularly in regards to risks to our lungs and hearts. Air pollution causes over 2,500 early deaths in Scotland every year. However, in our town, we are lucky in that this concern is not one that majorly affects us. The main areas of Scotland affected by air pollution are Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee, Aberdeen, and Perth. As we live in a fairly rural area, there is little congestion or industrial pollution. We are fortunate to benefit from a number of green energy initiatives, like wind farms, which mean that we are able to limit the air pollution we suffer from. Whilst this issue still remains one of public concern, our town does not suffer a great deal from its impact.

Scotland's Air Pollution Zones



Today	Tomorrow	Outlook
Air pollution to remain low	Air pollution forecast to remain low	Low air pollution is expected to continue for all areas for the next few days.

5-day air pollution forecast map

The map shows the air pollution forecast for each local authority in Scotland.

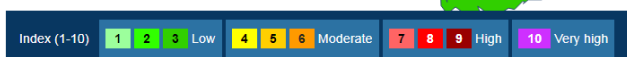
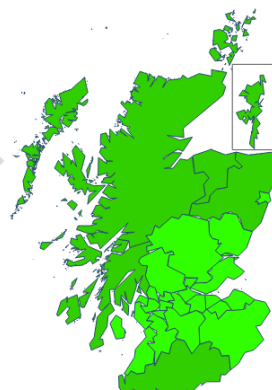
Today (21st November 2017)

[View a full forecast summary for each local authority](#)

The following days are available to view:

« Previous Day Next Day »

- Today (21st November 2017)
- Wednesday (22nd November 2017)
- Thursday (23rd November 2017)
- Friday (24th November 2017)
- Saturday (25th November 2017)



Question 2

What are the reasons for air pollution in your towns?

Most air pollution around where we live is caused by the burning of fossil fuels, like coal, oil and natural gas to produce energy and to power cars.

Today, there are more government programmes in place to reduce the amounts of finite resources we use and increase the amounts of renewable energy, like hydroelectric power, solar and wind power that we are using.

Cars are one of the main reasons for air pollution where we live. People use them every day, driving to work or school or to the shops. The amount of petrol and diesel cars that are being sold is slowing down with the advancement of technology, being able to produce electric cars. This is a greener way of driving but there are still thousands of cars that use fossil fuels to power them on the roads.

However the level of air pollution has decreased in recent years and we are more aware of the impact of air pollution and the government is doing more to encourage people to become more eco-friendly.

Question 3

What are the consequences of air pollution in your towns? What are the consequences for the public and for you as an individual?

For Peebles the latest pollution level is: LOW (Index 2) Last updated: 20/11/2017 10:00, this was taken from http://www.scottishairquality.co.uk/latest/site-info?site_id=PEEB

As Peebles is a suburban area, populated by around 8,000 people, it remains a rural town not particularly affected by pollution. This clearly has implications for the health of individuals with Government statistics estimating that air pollution in the UK reduces the life expectancy of every person by an average of 7-8 months, (<http://www.scottishairquality.co.uk/air-quality/>)

This would suggest that due to the low levels of pollution these consequences won't apply to us. Pollutants which we have particularly low levels of are, nitrogen dioxide and ozone. Nitrogen dioxide can irritate the lungs and lower resistance to respiratory infections such as influenza. Continued or frequent exposure to concentrations that are typically much higher than those normally found in the ambient air may cause increased incidence of acute respiratory illness in children. Therefore for the general public we can certainly say that low levels of this are a good thing for the public and especially sufferers of COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease) or asthma. Low air pollution allows biological environments to thrive, providing a backdrop for nature and for tourism, with tourist revenue being an important contributing portion of the Scottish Borders and also the Scottish economy.

Pollutant	Band	Concentration	Period
Ozone (O ₃)	LOW (2)	35 ug ^m ⁻³	8 Hour mean
Nitrogen dioxide (NO ₂)	LOW (1)	27 ug ^m ⁻³	Hourly mean
Nitrogen oxides as nitrogen dioxide (NO _x asNO ₂)	Not applicable	35 ug ^m ⁻³	Hourly mean
Nitric oxide (NO)	Not applicable	5 ug ^m ⁻³	Hourly mean

Despite this low level of air pollution we can still directly attribute around 3% of deaths in the borders to exposure to it these pollutants.

(<http://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/resourcedocument.aspx?id=1743>)

Question 4

What is generally done and what could be done to tackle air pollution in your towns?

In Peebles there is not much air pollution. One of the main and only sources of air pollution in Peebles is cars. Around Peebles there are many smaller towns and villages so they have to travel a lot either to get to school or go to the shops. In schools they have a walk to school week to encourage kids to walk more, share lifts or get the car half way to school and walk the rest. There are also regular bus services to cut down the amount of air pollution created by cars.

Although there is not much air pollution in Peebles in Edinburgh the nearest city there is a lot more air pollution. In Edinburgh there is also a lot of pollution created by cars. To reduce this air pollution there have been car parks built outside the city centre. An example of this is at Straiton, outside Edinburgh, where there is a park and ride car park. This has encouraged those who would usually take their car into the centre to drive half way and get the bus, therefore reducing air pollution; it was opened in 2008. Another way of reducing air pollution could be through car sharing. This could mean that drivers could alternate between who's driving to work/school so that fewer cars would be on the road. This would therefore lower the CO₂ emissions produced by car exhausts and mean less pollution is created. Also one of the things that has been done to reduce air pollution in Edinburgh is the introduction of Trams. A tram route has been put in place between York Place and Edinburgh Airport, 14km away and stopping at 16 stops. The trams began operating on the 31th May 2014. This is very like the park and ride situation as people can get on a tram around town instead of taking the car in, therefore, reducing air pollution.

A final way of reducing the amount of air pollution we create could be being more careful of what we burn. Burning rubbish and plastics can result in not only a smelly odour but the smoke can contain poisonous compounds which can both affect your respiratory system and also adds to the already existing air pollution. So through recycling and burning smaller amounts of rubbish at certain times we will be able to lower the risk of increasing the quantity and of greenhouse gases in the air.

Question 5

What can you do to minimise air pollution in your towns?

Air pollution is an increasing factor of society every day in most developing/developed countries. Most common sources of air pollution are car emissions and the burning of fossil fuels in manufacturing and factories.

One way to reduce these is to promote car sharing and have a more adaptable public transportation system in larger towns and cities. Cycling to work or school can also be promoted but in doing so safe storage for bikes must be increased.

We also think that by limiting places to park and/or introducing more parking metres will push people away from the idea of driving their cars which is only feasible if we have reliable and clean public transport systems. Introducing wind turbines and solar panels would also provide a more sufficient source of energy and eliminate the burning of fossil fuels.

We appreciate that the cost of building the infrastructures for this would be a huge investment but in the long run this can only be very beneficial for our society and for future generations.

Question 6

What do you think of introducing driving bans in city centres?

We believe that introducing a driving ban in city centres would be extremely beneficial for a number of reasons.

Firstly, it would reduce toxic emissions, as shown in Beijing, who introduced a system during the 2008 Olympic Games with odd and even number plates only being allowed in the city on certain days. The ban drove down airborne toxic matter by 20% during this time.

Cars produce around 57% of carbon dioxide in our atmosphere, so by banning cars in the cities we would reduce this percentage by a significant amount. Furthermore, a car-free city would have reduced traffic congestion, allowing residents to have a stress free commute by either public transport, bike or on foot. It would also create a safer atmosphere within the city, as few to no car accidents would take place as there would be a reduced traffic flow on the roads.

In this day and age, public transport is so well developed in many modernised cities that it almost eliminates the need for cars to be on the road; the subway, buses and trains are far quicker than being stuck in a mile long traffic jam and are also far more environmentally friendly due to their capacity to carry more people.