

Oxford St breaks pollution limit on 127 days this year

Clean London



Evening Standard Investigation

Mark Blunden Technology Reporter

BANNING vehicles from Oxford Street would cut “illegally high” levels of pollution by three quarters, new analysis has revealed.

Data compiled for the Standard by the environmental tech firm Plume Labs found the central London shopping destination has already breached EU nitrogen dioxide limits on 127 days since New Year's Day.

This works out to illegal levels of toxic air cloaking Oxford Street 80 per cent of the time, or 5.6 days per week, according to Plume Labs.

The app-maker's data and atmospheric scientists simulated a traffic-free model, using machine-learning software to calculate that removing vehicles would cut NO2 levels by 33 per cent. This would reduce overall illegal pollution levels to 33 days, about 20 per cent of the time. The new analysis could

reignite the row between Westminster city council and Mayor Sadiq Khan over pedestrianisation of Oxford Street.

Westminster withdrew support in April for his plan to ban east-west vehicles from the half-mile portion running from Orchard Street by Selfridges to Oxford Circus, saying cars and trucks could gridlock residential side-roads.

Mr Khan described the decision as a “betrayal”, but Westminster said “the majority of its residents” supported the decision, although this worked out at just 1,386 of people who responded to a consultation, or 61 per cent, out of the borough's 227,000 residents.

The new figures were calculated from a 24-hour average of nitrogen oxide reaching the 50-micrograms per cubic metre EU air quality limit. Street-level data was gathered from government air quality and weather sensors, plus traffic and urban planning statistics.

Plume Labs' Romain Lacombe said: “Cutting traffic could bring the number of days breaching the law down to 20 per cent. Pedestrianising Oxford Street could drastically cut levels of nitrogen oxides, the most harmful pollutant behind the city's air pollution crisis.”



War memorial: the replica trench system is 328ft long and is part of the Battlefields to Butterflies meadow at the flower show

FIRST World War trenches have been dug into the manicured lawns of Hampton Court Palace to honour its gardeners killed in the conflict.

The 4ft 6in-deep replica system, commissioned by the Royal Parks Guild, is modelled on those used in one of the Great War's bloodiest summer battles. Amid barbed wire spikes, visitors to next week's Hampton Court Flower Show can experience the Battlefields to Butterflies meadow of

Trenches dug into palace lawn honour gardener soldiers

blooming poppies, cornflowers, loosestrife, mallows and cranesbills.

The memorial garden, marking the centenary of the Armistice, was designed by award-winning landscape architect Todd Longstaffe-Gowan and

work began cutting the 328ft-long trench in April. Of the 245 Royal Parks workers who enlisted, 24 were killed or listed missing and 23 were wounded. The granddaughter and great-grandson of Hampton Court gardener Arthur William Berry will attend a plaque-unveiling ceremony on Monday. Gunner Berry served in the 173rd Siege Battery of the Royal Garrison Artillery and died in an air raid aged 36.

Mark Blunden