



■ Celebrating the launch of Norwich's first low emission zone are (from left): Bruce Tofield (UEA), Councillor Brian Morrey (vice chairman of Norwich Highways Agency Committee), Tony Adams (chairman of Norwich Highways Agency Committee), Carl Lummis (Simmonds buses), David Pursey (Anglia buses) and Peter Iddon (First buses).

Picture: ANTHONY KELLY

Cleaner air for city

A PROJECT to keep the streets of Norwich clean and healthy for the people who live and work here got underway this week.

The city's first low emission zone has been launched in a bid to keep pollutants at a minimum and clean up Norwich's air.

The measure, carried out in Castle Meadow, traditionally one of the areas in the city with the worst air quality problems, means bus companies now have stricter limits on their exhaust emissions.

Drivers also have to switch off their engines when waiting and have been offered free eco-driving training.

Experts working on the initiative, which is one of 17 being rolled out in the city, said they are pretty sure that these measures will help bring pollution down.

Bruce Tofield, from CRed, the UEA-based carbon reduction programme, said: "In Norwich, especially compared to other cities such as Greater London, the problem of traffic pollution is relatively small but there was concern that the amount of pollutants in the air would go above the guidelines.

"It's difficult to make a prediction as to how much these measures will reduce the amount of pollutants but as we see an increase of new buses and retrofit buses, it will have a really big impact and will keep the levels under the threshold, keeping

the atmosphere in Norwich clean and breathable."

He said the eco-driving training will also play a large part in bringing the amount of pollutants down, not just in the low emission zone but throughout the city.

Bosses of bus companies in the city have invested millions of pounds into their fleets to make their vehicles more environmentally-friendly and to comply with the restrictions.

The introduction of the zone is a joint initiative between Norfolk County Council and Norwich City Council and is one of the measures introduced as part of the CIVITAS initiative, co-financed by the European Union, for cleaner and better transport in cities.

At the moment, at least 50pc of buses using Castle Meadow have to comply with the strict exhaust emission standards. By 2010 this will be a requirement of all buses.

Air quality within the low emission zone will be monitored and checks made to ensure that operators are complying with the traffic regulation condition. If drivers are caught with their engines running while waiting in Castle Meadow, their bus firm will face a £50 on-the-spot fine.

Elsewhere, St Augustine's and Grapes Hill are also areas that have air quality problems and actions are also being taken to deal with these, such as changing traffic flow.

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