

COSLA submission 28 October 2022

PE1944/D: Enforce engine idling ban

- We are grateful for the opportunity to consider and share a Local Government perspective on this petition.
- COSLA does not have an official position on a ban on engine idling. However, our stated net zero and public health objectives are in line with reducing emissions from cars. We are also clear about our support for the sustainable travel hierarchy which seeks to minimise car use. COSLA has also developed, with Scottish Government, the joint route map to reducing car kilometres 20% by 2030. As a result, we understand the petitioners desire to see less engine idling in their communities. Looking specifically at the asks in the petition, this response will primarily address the call to *“legally oblige local authorities to enforce the engine idling ban”*.
- Currently Local Authorities have the discretionary power, but not the legal obligation, to enforce a ban on engine idling. It would not be a simple matter if it were to become a statutory duty. To do so would require a step change in resources and, without clarity on additional flexible resources, it will be difficult to support the call. To be a success, any ban would need to be supported by a high profile, national information campaign.
- Local Authority budgets across Scotland are increasingly stretched and challenging decisions are being taken on what to focus on. If enforcing the ban were to become a legal obligation, additional funding would need to be allocated. As it stands, many Local Authorities simply do not have the additional resources or staff capacity that would be required.
- The differences in enforcing the ban in rural and urban settings should also be considered, particularly considering the difference in costs or administrative time that ensuring full compliance with the ban would necessitate. This would clearly have significant consequences on the cost of enforcement for different Local Authorities.

- We understand that several councils have used the discretionary powers afforded to them to advise motorists to stop idling or issuing them with official guidance on the ban as opposed to issuing fines in the first instance. We note that the petition calls for the introduction of “*instant £80 fines for offences*” whilst the current legislation calls for fines as a last resort or for repeat offenders. As there may be road users unaware of the ban an alternative approach may be to have a new communication campaign to show the harmful effects of air pollution from motor vehicles.