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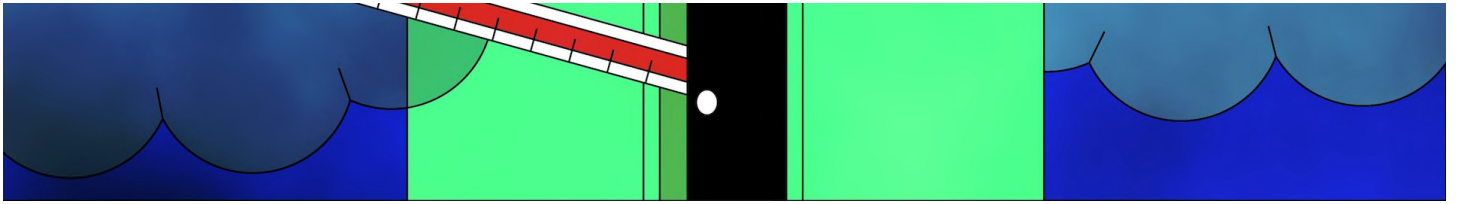
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## Could low air quality pull down your house price?





The Central Office of Public Interest launched an air quality campaign that allows anyone to search a London postcode to see a neighbourhood's air quality rating

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By **Melissa Lawford**  
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**A**ir pollution accounts for 40,000 avoidable deaths a year in the UK. It causes heart attacks, strokes (<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/10/20/nhs-boss-announces-air-pollution-emergency-major-study-shows/>) and, according to a new study, baldness (<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/10/08/air-pollution-can-cause-baldness-first-major-study-finds/>).

An investigation into air quality in the capital by Imperial College London (<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/10/10/londons-poisoned-lungs-revealed-survey-shows-quarter-green-spaces/>) found that 24pc of play spaces and 27pc of public parks had nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) levels above the European threshold. So could it affect the price of your home?

Humphrey Milles, the founder of the Central Office of Public Interest (COPI), thinks so. He launched an air quality campaign, [addresspollution.org](http://addresspollution.org), that lets anyone search a London postcode to see a neighbourhood's air quality rating and helps them contact their MPs.

In an unusual reversal of fortunes, in London at least, it is "the areas where the most influential and wealthy people reside" that have the dirtiest air, says Milles. Prime central London ranks worst. Even the Queen, it turns out, breathes illegal air. Buckingham Palace is in one of the most polluted parts of the country.

According to a survey of London homeowners commissioned by COPI, 76pc think buyers and renters should get price reductions for homes in areas with illegal pollution levels. Some 45pc think the discount should be at least a fifth of the house price.

**How high is air pollution in your area?**

SEARCH

But do people really care enough about air quality to affect property values yet? Pollution is just beginning to come onto the requests radar for prime London buyers, says Thea Carroll, founder of Thea Carroll Property Consultancy.

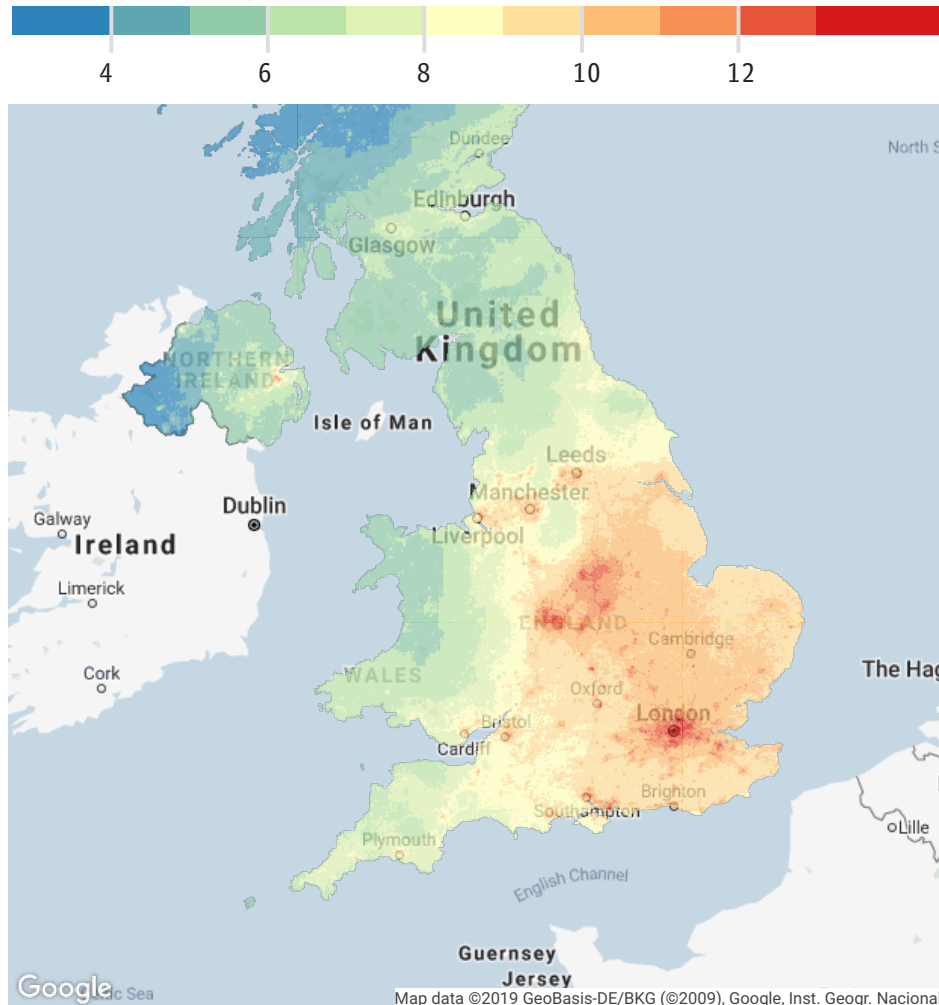
Recently, Carroll was doing a search for a family and found a probate property on the Chelsea Embankment.

"We had the idea to test for NO<sub>2</sub> and carbon monoxide levels because they had a young baby," says Carroll. "Lo and behold, they were above legal levels. Even buying [the property with a price that was] 20 per cent under wouldn't have made it an attractive enough proposition to take their new family there." She looked elsewhere for her client.

But would a 20pc discount have been possible? "It's hypothetical nonsense in my opinion," says Carroll. It would mean that "you're then arguing that air pollution is a more tangible risk to London's property market than macroeconomics, politics, Brexit and Corbyn".

## How polluted is the air where you live?

PM2.5 annual average  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$



Map data ©2019 GeoBasis-DE/BKG (©2009), Google, Inst. Geogr. Nacional

SOURCE: [DEFRA](#)

The real limitation, of course, is that most of London has high levels of air pollution (<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/0/cleanest-polluted-air-uk-revealed-clean-live/>); if we want to live here we have to lump it. Is air pollution bad enough to push people out of the capital?

“No, it’s never mentioned,” says Rupert Reeves of Carter Jonas's Newbury office in West Berkshire, an area that traditionally has a solid stream of buyers moving out of the capital.

“They are much more concerned about noise pollution than air pollution,” says Reeves. “It’s amazing how things that you might think are important to buyers don’t seem to be on their radar at the moment.”

Some agents are looking to the future – and seeking out a silver lining wherever possible. “A conversation being bandied around by agents at the moment is that a property may be on a bus route now, but buses are going to be electric in a few years so it’s only going to get quieter and cleaner,” says Carroll. “Some of these agents are selling main thoroughfares as a positive.”