



Fifteen members of the eco-activist group Climate Rush, dressed in brightly coloured cleaning attire including feather dusters, headscarves, pinnies and marigolds, cleaned a message on the floor outside the Royal Courts of Justice with the words 'We object to dirty air' on Wednesday. The action marks the first day of a hearing in the Court of Appeal where the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)'s action on air pollution will be scrutinised.

Law firm ClientEarth brought a case to the High Court in December, which resulted in DEFRA admitting to breaching European Union laws on air quality. However, the judge did not force DEFRA to adapt plans to improve air quality in the UK to address this breach of EU law. Today the Court of Appeal will re-examine the case.

Air pollution is linked to the early deaths of 29,000 people in the UK, childhood asthma and permanent reduced lung capacity in children as well as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and heart disease in people over 65. Air pollution in the UK is a public health epidemic requiring urgent action. The legal challenge was brought against Caroline Spelman, the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, because current air quality plans for 17 regions and cities (including London, Manchester, Birmingham, and Glasgow) will not achieve legal limits for air quality until 2020, with safe breathing in London postponed until 2025. The deadline for achieving these limits was 1 January 2010.

A spokesperson for Climate Rush, Andrew Tobert, said "We've cleaned a message outside the Royal Courts of Justice today to let DEFRA know that they need to clean up their act for the hundreds of thousands of people who are forced to breathe toxic air. This is a public health epidemic and our government should be doing all they can to improve air quality by improving public transport services, investing in cycling safety and banning the most polluted cars from the most polluted places."

Climate Rush are organising a social media campaign throughout the hearing. This morning's

clean air action is part of a wider clean air campaign that has included a march on Parliament Square, a roadblock on Euston Junction and a message made out of pollution glued to the street near Boris Johnson's house.