

Why we need innovation in construction and freight to tackle air pollution

When we launched Breathable Cities in 2023, an accelerator programme for startups tackling air pollution, we didn't envisage the diversity of solutions in development. It became an unexpected opportunity and a challenge because air pollution has so many contributory factors seeking solutions.

Temps de lecture : minute

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The problem with air pollution innovation

From indoor air pollution caused by factors such as the structural health of a building, heating, cooking and cooling - to outdoor air pollution created by building sites, food delivery transport to tyre-wear. The spectrum of problems and health impacts are vast.

Notwithstanding, the Breathable Cities cohort of air quality startups and their achievements was impressive. With over £6M investment raised and a number of authority and industry testbeds and contracts already in play, these startups are proof that rapid innovation can play a significant role in tackling the pollution crisis we face.

The state of our cities

What we all know for certain is that cities are conductors for poor air quality. Urban communities often have poor air quality due to a combination of factors, primarily stemming from human activities as well

as geographical features.

And the worst affected by air pollution are often marginalised communities who are under privileged and least represented

We also know that due to a dense concentration of vehicles, industrial facilities and construction projects within urban districts, these factors are all huge sources of emissions and polluting air.

According to the Clean Air Fund *'Reducing polluting air caused by building, construction, freight and transport sectors is key to creating sustainable cities and healthier communities'*

How can we help drive the solutions for improving air quality?

At *Growth Studio*, we are mission bound to help turn startup solutions into profitable businesses that fix the planet.

So in 2024 we have begun working with Impact on Urban Health and the construction, building, freight and transport sectors to explore challenges and opportunities related to reducing air pollution.

Why focus on construction and transport?

The construction industry is a significant contributor to air pollution, and its impact can be categorised in several ways, including dust, emissions from machinery, transportation, and the production of building materials.

Road transport is the largest emitting sector of UK GHG emissions, responsible for 21% of emissions according to recent data.

Improving community health

The Air Quality Challenge Prize aligns with Impact on Urban Health's mission to improve the health of people in local London communities - and achieve better health outcomes as a result.

Our mission is to reduce air pollution in urban environments by partnering with industry to bring-to-market solutions that cut emissions in construction and freight.

We've kicked off our work researching attitudes, challenges and opportunities in reducing the levels of air pollution attributed to freight and construction.

Subsequently, the Air Quality Challenge Prize will encourage industry to demo, trial and ultimately adopt solutions that reduce emissions at source, and reduce people's exposure to harmful pollutants.

Through this work we aim to partner and collaborate with a network of industry, innovators, academics, local government and technologists to accelerate solutions.

A London legacy

London Mayor Sadiq Khan has maintained a spotlight on air pollution in London. Whilst some of his implementation has been controversial, he has built a global reputation for addressing air pollution in London.

We want to build on this legacy to launch the world's biggest air quality innovation hub in London. There is too much sector fragmentation in air pollution so our aim is to cluster experts to share insights, data, research and innovation solutions.

As we build our research and knowledge, we want to speak to leaders in the construction industry, transport and freight - so if that's you or you are part of these sectors - please do get in touch!

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For more information about Breathable Cities 2 and the Air Pollution Challenge Prize, visit our website [here](#).

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