

THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

Phone (0191) 386 2595
Email chair@durhamcity.org
Web site: <http://www.DurhamCity.org>

c/o Blackett, Hart & Pratt, LLP
Aire House
Mandale Business Park
Belmont
Durham, DH1 1TH
12 May 2020

Is Durham the Greenest City in the UK? Some Comments from the City of Durham Trust

The City of Durham Trust was very surprised to read recent press reports that Durham is the greenest city in the UK. We would have been delighted to discover it was true, but a careful check of the source of the reports soon revealed serious doubts about the validity of the evidence base for this assertion.

The press reports were based on a report from The Solar Centre. This turns out to be a company that makes and sells solar-powered lights rather than a scientific research organisation, so that immediately raised questions. Fortunately their report does explain their methodology: “The index uses both city and local authority data. For local authority-level data the score is applied to the city within it. For example, if Perth and Kinross council has a score of 5.23 for CO2 Emissions, then Perth receives 5.23.” This implies that Durham City’s score for CO2 emissions is the score for the County as a whole, so the heavily polluted air in the city centre would be counter-balanced by the pure air of upper Weardale and Teesdale.

The score for air quality is based on “crowdsourced data of perceived pollution and air quality levels in each city.” For Durham it is based on the “crowdsourced” views of just 6 people who contributed to the Numbeo Pollution Index during the 3 years to February 2020. So there is no scientific measuring of the volume of nitrogen dioxide using the air quality monitor at the Milburngate roundabout in the middle of Durham City’s Air Quality Management Area where the pollution exceeds statutory levels. (See *County Durham Plan Pre-Submission Draft 2019*, paragraph 5.226.) Other indicators in the report are similarly flawed.

The Trust is delighted to acknowledge the work being done by Durham County Council and others such as the City of Durham Parish Council and Durham University’s Energy Institute to reduce pollution in the City. Unfortunately this Solar Centre report does not provide reliable data reflecting the progress that has been

THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

made, nor a realistic analysis of the challenges that we face. It could very easily provide a false sense of security.

For further information please contact John Lowe, Chair of the City of Durham Trust