

Smogging the air- By 5M



“Wow, my Dad is clearly embarrassing” muttered Lara, whilst shaking her head. “C’mon you two - let’s head off to school and I still need to finish off my English homework. If I don’t get it done, then Miss Costi will be furious with me.

Greg, Lisa and Lara all made their way towards Hazelwood School, rushing through the playground occupied with lively crowds of people. They saw Sango the caretaker and Ms Powell (one of the Assistant Heads) waiting outside. Just then, Greg remembered that he had completely forgotten about his Maths homework. Pausing to catch his breath, he rummaged through his bag, pushing aside his favourite ball before finding his task scrunched up into a ball at the bottom. He took it out, held it in front of his face, and tried to unscrunch it as best he could. As he did this, he noticed something horrifying in front of him. His eyes widened, his mouth dropped and his legs started shaking. The front of the school was covered in smoky, diesel black fumes coming from the cars parked up outside. Lots of the children were coughing and spluttering as they made their way into the school building.

“Whoa, when has this been such a problem?” Lisa asked herself, putting her homework slowly back into her bag. “I know we have lots of cars driving down Hazelwood Lane, but this is crazy. Hey, Greg, Lara come here for a sec!”

Greg and Lara made their way over to Lisa, a puzzled expression on both of their faces.

“What’s up?” Greg and Lara asked in unison.

“Take a look,” replied Lisa, pointing in the direction of the cars. “Look at all of the dust and smoke. It’s terrible!”

“Ahhh, it’s been like that for ages, ” Lisa exclaimed loudly “Ever since they closed off some of the roads in the local area, more cars have been coming this way to get around the traffic. Greg and I are used to it.”

“Used to it? How can you be used to it?” exclaimed Lara, tears forming in her eyes from all of the fumes.

“Blimey, calm down,” answered Lisa, a little surprised by Lara’s reaction. “There’s no need to be that upset. And besides, we’re only kids. It’s for the grown ups to sort out.”

Lara stood there in utter silence. How could Lara and Greg be so foolish?

Noticing that Lisa was completely distracted, Greg pulled her away from the entrance and the three of them headed off into the building.

For the rest of the day, Lisa couldn't believe what she saw. She couldn't get the image of the fumes out of her head. She knew she had to do something about it and also make a difference to the environment that we live in.

"Come on, Lisa!" said Greg, shaking her by the shoulders. "I know it's not great but you need to snap out of it. If you're not careful, you won't be able to complete any work and you will fail your classes."

"That's right - you can't spend all day worrying about it," Lara sighed. "It's not like there's anything you can do about it anyway."

But Lisa couldn't 'snap out of it'. It wasn't as simple as that. That image of smoky fumes and dust remained in her head for the rest of the day, even on the walk home. She wanted to do something but she had no idea what to do. Was she right? Can she do something about it?

As Lisa approached the wooden, caramel door of her house, she turned the key in the keyhole, and made her way in.

Mum and Dad were sat in the living room, eyes fixated on the television, which was showing the latest news report.

“Hi honey,” Mum murmured, glancing at Lisa “How was school?”

But Lisa was too distracted to respond. Instead, she quickly sat herself on the sofa and began staring at the screen.

“In latest news, the Mayor of London has today announced the introduction of several new ‘ultra low emission zones’ in order to reduce the amount of air pollution in central London. These ULEZs will lessen the number of cars entering certain areas, which will hopefully improve the air quality.”

“Dad? Have we got any ULEZs around here?” Lisa asked, hesitantly looking at her father

“Around here? Nah, they’re mainly down central London,” Lisa’s father’s eyes still locked on the screen.

“Well, who decides where the ULEZs should be?” questioned Lisa

“The council usually makes decision on things like that. Don’t get your hopes up though - they still haven’t responded to my complaint about the land pollution in the area.. It’s been monthsnow!” Dad groaned.

Suddenly, Lisa’s eyes lit up. She had had an idea! _Can I get my friends to help me? Can I start a petition?

Later that evening, Lisa began drafting a letter to the council. She had written about 10 drafts! Each time, she shown the letter to her father,, who was doing everything he could to help her. Each time, she went back to her room, determined to write the perfect letter. She mentioned things like breathing difficulties from the pollution and how the atmosphere is smoggy. She, even included photos of the diesel black fumes. She made sure that she ended her letter with a lovely rhetorical question: What can you do to help this problem? Hopefully, that did the trick! If not, then she might have to think about leading a protest outside the school gates!

The very next morning, Lisa woke up feeling optimistic and positive. She had actually managed to get up before Mum could start shouting at her. With a feeling of contempt she quickly got dressed for school (she managed to find a clean pair of socks and a clean t-shirt),. She zoomed down the stairs and skidded into the kitchen, where a bowl of porridge was waiting for her.

“Wow, you’re up early,” Mum uttered. “Is everything alright? Are you feeling OK?”

“Yep, I’m fine! It’s just that I want to go to school quickly and start helping the environment.I want to make a change!” explained Lisa with a mouthful porridge

“Oh right, good luck, replied Mum, who was now washing the dishes.

It had been 4 weeks now, and still nothing from the council. She was beginning to feel utterly gutted. Whenever the postman arrived, she would race down the stairs (almost treading on poor Tommy the cat a few times) in a mad rush to grab the post, but each time, she was left disappointed.

“C’mon Lisa,” stated Greg, whilst on the way to school. “It’s only been four weeks. And besides, like I said, you’re only a kid. What makes you think the council are going to respond to you?”

“Ahhh, maybe you’re right,” replied Lisa, a gloomy look appearing on her face. “I guess I just thought that they cared more about the environment.”

“Come on, let’s get to school. Remember, it’s double Maths today - we’ve got a test!” Lara exclaimed, rubbing her hands together gleefully. “I love tests!”

“Was that meant to cheer me up?” muttered Lisa “Coz it definitely didn’t.”

As the three youths made their way along Hazelwood Lane, they noticed that things seemed a little quieter today along the roads. A little too quiet for their liking.

Coming around the corner, Lisa couldn’t believe her eyes. What was going on? What had happened?

There was a team of people, wearing fluorescent orange jackets with the council emblem emblazoned on the backs, putting up some road signs. Lisa sprinted across the road (don't worry - she made sure it was safe!) and approach the council workers, her heart beamed with excitement.

“What's that?” asked Lisa, peering up at the sign. “What are you doing?”

One of the workers turned around and glanced down at Lisa.

“The council has decided to make this section of Hazelwood Lane ULEZ, which means that the majority of cars won't be allowed to come by here. I think it's something to do with your school and the amount of pollution!” the worker smiled.

BUZZ! BUZZ! It was his phone!

“Lisa, this letter came for you this morning! It's from the council! I'm so proud of you!” the message read. It was inspirational! There was a photo attached to the message.

opened the photo and in astonishment.

“Dear Lisa. Thank you for your letter concerning the severe amount of pollution in the area outside Hazelwood School. I agree - this is a serious problem, that affects people of all ages. Thank you for bringing it to my attention. A team of council workers will be dealing with this issue as a matter of urgency. Many thanks, Maria Enfield Council Environmental Officer.”

Lisa stood there in disbelief. She'd done it!

“Whoa, Lisa! Have you seen what's going on? They're making this road an ULEZ! You did Greg, jumping up on Lisa's shoulders.

“I can't believe your letter actually worked!” bellowed Lara. “I can't believe it!”

It had worked. It took a little while, but it had worked. I had done it.