

NEWS

'I fear visiting Glasgow as the toxic air might kill me'

Julia Horton

A woman with severe asthma who fears that attending a gig in Glasgow to celebrate her 30th birthday could kill her because of the city's heavy air pollution has urged greater action to end its status as a virtual no-go zone for people with lung diseases.

The last time Rachael Fenton went to a concert in the city she had such a serious asthma attack she was rushed to hospital. In the near-decade since, she has barely gone into Glasgow at all because of the traffic fumes, and on the rare occasions when she does risk a trip she takes someone with her out of fear that breathing in the toxic atmosphere will set off her chronic asthma condition.

Recalling the gig she attended in 2008, Fenton, who turns 30 in December, said: "I was at the SECC for a concert but I ended up at the Western [Infirmity] after I started having an attack.

"I'm going to the Hydro in December for my 30th with a friend to see Steps and I suspect I will probably end up in hospital again because the air is so bad, so I'm nervous as well as excited.

"I have the most severe form of asthma and am in hospital regularly because I stop breathing and can black out during attacks. I haven't been able to work since 2005 and I can't go shopping or out for dinner the way other people can, which makes me angry sometimes."

The pollution in Kilmarnock, where Fenton lives with her mother, is also getting worse, she said, as the town has grown, and others in Ayrshire with respiratory conditions "can't go places" like Glasgow either due to pollution.

She conceded that the issues are challenging, and welcomed the SNP's recent pledge to phase out new petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2032, but thinks more could be done to get existing vehicles off the streets sooner.

And she added: "Heart disease gets so much more publicity than lung disease, which is like the poor man's disease. The difference in the money put in [by government] is quite staggering."

Around 1m people nationwide have lung disease, and air pollution contributes to an estimated 15,000 early deaths



in Scotland annually, with cities including Glasgow routinely failing European safety limits. The level of nitrogen dioxide in the air in Glasgow city centre was found to be 40% above safe levels earlier this year.

The SNP's pledge on petrol and diesel vehicles is the most ambitious in the UK, and Scotland was the first European country to pass legislation to tackle fine particulate matter, another pollutant.

Its Cleaner Air for Scotland strategy and forthcoming low emission zones (LEZ) in Scotland's four biggest cities by 2020 were also welcomed by the British Lung Foundation (BLF) Scotland.

But a spokeswoman for the charity said: "We need a five-year plan for lung disease, like those for cancer or stroke, and we need health outcome targets.

"We hear people saying they only need to open the door if they're thinking of going into Glasgow [to tell that pollution is too high to risk it]."

The Scottish government said its £100m cancer strategy included work tackling lung cancer, while funding for lung disease included £150,000 for a joint research project with BLF Scotland. It said it was committed to "firm action", including ongoing work on a respiratory health quality improvement plan.

Glasgow city council acknowledged that "poor air quality" was a "significant" public health concern and "major social justice issue". It said it aims to be Scotland's first LEZ city, reducing congestion and removing the "most polluting diesel engines" from city streets.



Fenton's asthma means she is afraid to travel into the city; a traffic jam on the M8 Motorway in Glasgow city centre

Beaumont in near misses on globe trip

Jason Allardyce

Mark Beaumont, the Scottish endurance cyclist, has told of several brushes with death during his successful attempt to become the first to cycle round the world in 80 days.

In an interview with The Sunday Times, he discloses that car drivers screamed abuse at him "all the time" and one tried to run him off the road in America.

In the Pyrenees, days before finishing, Beaumont was nearly run over by a lorry and believes he would have died had the driver not stopped. "My crew got a hell of a fright," he said.

In another incident a car drove into the back of his support vehicle in Melbourne. He said: "That was incredibly upsetting. The young mum had a toddler in the back who was unconscious. I needed to be a metre to the right or I would have been killed. She obviously wasn't looking; on a clear day on a dual carriageway she drove into the back of a bus. If I'd been on the road instead of the RV it would have been over."

Beaumont is campaigning for a change in the law to place the onus on drivers to demonstrate they were only partially liable for an accident involving cyclists.

He also tells how his parents divorced when he was a teenager and his 64-year-old mother, Una, is his "chief executive... In my mid-twenties I would get embarrassed that my mummy was working for me. Now I'm proud of it. She does an amazing job."

But he also discusses the difficult relationship he has with his father who he says has never told him he's proud of him. "My dad said, 'Don't throw away your career by pedalling. Get a proper job.'"

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The wheel Philaeas Fogg pedals away the pain, page 24

Weir takes cue from Aikman in fight against killer disease

Mark Palmer

Rugby legend Doddie Weir says he is using Gordon Aikman as an inspiration in his fight for more research into motor neurone disease (MND) and better provision for the 450 patients with the condition who live in Scotland.

Aikman, the campaigning Sunday Times columnist who lost his battle with MND earlier this year at the age of 31, successfully lobbied the Scottish government to double the number of specialist nurses and to fund them through the NHS. He also raised more than £500,000 for research.

Weir, 47, who announced in June that he was suffering from MND, has launched his own foundation, My Name's Doddie Foundation, and he believes the former Better Together director of research set an outstanding example of how to respond to a devastating diagnosis. With MND, the average life expectancy from the time of diagnosis is just 14 months.

"Gordon made a difference, because he pushed a lot of things through

COLORSPORT/REX/SHUTTERSTOCK



Doddie Weir, who won 61 caps for Scotland, is calling for more research into motor neurone disease

You've got limited time, and with that we're making changes within my working environment to spend more time with my family, which is the important thing.

"It's a fight that we've been given, so it's a fight we're going to take. Similar to Gordon, we're quite happy to straight talk and mention to the hierarchy in the medical industry that we're not happy with the way things are working. At the end of the day, what have I got to lose?"

"The problem is numbers. There's only 450 people in Scotland who have MND and drug companies don't want to get involved because it's not financially viable. There should be some pressure on them to do that, to give options. Yes, they might not work but at least you've tried."

"At the front end, where we are trying to find a cure, there's not enough being done. We're doing a lot of things off our own bat which I find quite bizarre. It's like taking a car into a garage and you've got to diagnose and fix it yourself."

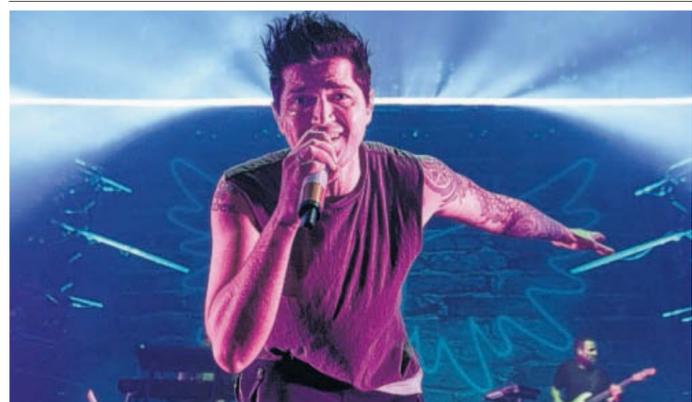
Weir won 61 Scotland caps in a decade-long international career.

for nursing and after-care. A lot of the improvements there are down to his work.

"[His attitude] also makes you think about what you do.

SPORT
"I'm lucky, I've got the chance to give it a battle", page 11

THE BEST OF WHAT'S ON IN SCOTLAND



There's so much to see and do in Scotland every week, and from next weekend The Sunday Times Scotland will be the place to find out about the best of it.

Critical List Scotland, our comprehensive new weekly listings guide, will highlight the unmissable from music, comedy, theatre and art to the best days out and ways to entertain the kids. Plus there will be a chance to win money-can't-buy VIP gig tickets.

So whether you want to be dazzled by Disney on Ice, blown away by Blondie or Benedetti or to sing along to The Script, pictured, don't miss it next Sunday.

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