

Full letter accompanying the petition by AdBlock Leeds

The petition can be found at <https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/ask-leeds-city-council-to-ban-harmful-ads/>

April 2021

Dear Councillors

In the recent years, several statements have been made by the Leeds City Council with the aim of improving the wellbeing of Leeds residents and shifting towards a sustainable, net-zero city. In particular

- The [Best Council Plane 2020-2025](#) states that the Council's ambition is "for Leeds to be the **best city for health and wellbeing**" (p 14)
- The [Climate emergency declaration](#) aims at making Leeds a **net-zero city by 2030**

We welcome these statements and believe that, in line with them, Leeds City Council should have a strict policy about what products can be advertised in the city. In particular, we propose that outdoors advertisement for the following products should not be allowed:

- Food and drinks high in fat, salt or sugar
- Alcoholic beverages
- Gambling
- High carbon products such as fossil fuel companies, thermal engine vehicles or airlines

These products are established as damaging to our society and some of them are already subjected to advertisement restrictions. It is in the interest of our local communities to extend these restrictions to all outdoors advertisement. Details on how these products are harmful are given further below.

Similar bans have been taken by the [Bristol City Council](#) and [Transport for London](#). As far as we know, there are currently no bans on advertisement for high carbon products anywhere in the world, although cities like [Liverpool](#) or [Amsterdam](#) have recently taken the first steps towards such a legislation.

It is important to note that banning **advertising** for a product is not the same as banning the product itself. A good example is the ban of [tobacco advertising](#), which was prohibited in 2003 after decades of public health campaigning.

Leeds has the opportunity to lead the way and implement an advertisement policy that has the wellbeing of its residents at its core.

Relevant facts

Food and drinks high in fat, salt or sugar (HFSS)

Weight-associated health problems are very serious in England with nearly [two thirds of adults being categorised as overweight or obese](#). Public Health England estimated that the cost of overweight and obesity related issues is about [£6.1 billion for the NHS and £27 billion to the wider UK society](#). The definition of advertisement for HFSS food and drink is [well established](#), and there are already some [restrictions in place](#), such as a ban of these advertisement next to nurseries and schools.

Alcoholic beverages

In 2018-2019, there were nearly **10,000 alcohol dependent adults in Leeds** according to [Public Health England](#). A [study from 2008/2009](#) estimated the economic and social costs of alcohol-related harm in Leeds to be a staggering **£438 million**. Similarly to HFSS food and drinks, [there already are restrictions](#) as to suitable locations for alcoholic beverage advertisement.

Gambling

An estimated **350,000 people** in the UK suffer from [gambling addiction](#).

High carbon products

We recommend that advertisement for the following products should be banned:

Product	Notes
Airlines and airports: all advertising by airports and airlines which might reasonably be deemed to promote more flying	There are currently no low-carbon options for air travel, and “ Zero-carbon aviation is highly unlikely to be feasible by 2050 ”, according to the Climate Change Committee
Advertising by fossil fuel companies: We define fossil fuel companies as firms that have over 80% of their investments in coal, oil and gas.	Carbon Underground 200 provides a useful methodology for this definition. The ban should cover fossil fuel companies advertising their ‘green’ activities, since such ads would effectively be promoting the whole company.
Cars: all advertising and promotions for petrol, diesel and hybrid vehicles and Plug-In Hybrid Electric Vehicles (PHEV)	The health costs of cars in Leeds amounted to £77 million in 2018. PHEVs have been shown not to yield meaningful emissions savings over conventional vehicles.