



Association of Directors of
Environment, Economy, Planning & Transport

Air Quality and Industrial Emissions
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Submitted electronically to:
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13th August 2018

Dear AQ&IE Team,

Consultation on Clean Air Strategy - ADEPT response.

About ADEPT

The Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport (ADEPT) represents Place Directors from county, unitary and metropolitan authorities, along with Directors of Local Enterprise Partnerships and corporate partners drawn from key service sectors. ADEPT members are at the very heart of maximising sustainable growth in communities throughout the UK. We deliver the projects that are key to unlocking broader economic success and creating more resilient communities, economies and infrastructure.

General comments

ADEPT welcomes the publication of the draft Clean Air Strategy, the recognition that poor air quality is a major public health challenge, and the Government's ambition to tackle it.

Last year we responded to the DEFRA consultation *Tackling nitrogen dioxide in our towns and cities* (June 2017) and submitted views to the joint Select Committee inquiry on air quality to scrutinise Government plans for tackling air pollution (November 2017). Our key messages then are still just as relevant now:

- Air pollution is not just a health issue, it is a health inequality issue that has a disproportionate impact on children and on the people who live in our poorest communities
- Tackling air pollution requires a 'joined up' approach that crosses sectors, professions, and administrative boundaries. Air quality is a national issue, the Government must play its part and provide proactive leadership, not just push responsibility to councils to design local solutions.

- Clean Air Zones with charging will have the greatest impact in reducing air pollution in the worst affected areas over the short to medium term.
- In the longer term, better planning is needed to create healthy, sustainable communities that facilitate and promote alternatives to the use of polluting vehicles.
- Air pollution is not just a technical issue, but communications and behaviour change are important. Greater public awareness is crucial both in helping people understand how their behaviour/transport choices impacts on air quality, and also enabling them to use current information to modify their travel and avoid the worst affected areas.

We were pleased to welcome a member of the DEFRA Air Quality team to a recent meeting of our Environment Board. Her presentation stimulated a lively debate and we hope that some of that is reflected in our response below. We would be very keen to continue this dialogue with you beyond the timescale of this consultation and to contribute to the thinking around the emerging draft legislation.

Key messages:

- As the UK prepares to leave the EU, Government must ensure that there is no reduction in legislation, standards and funding for air quality – in our recent response to the consultation on environmental principles and governance, ADEPT called for non-regression and international co-operation to be added to the list of statutory environmental principles that the Government is proposing.
- Government needs to provide a ‘joined up’ approach to air quality so that key investment and infrastructure decisions taken by the big spending departments – Transport, Housing, Defence – take account of the need to reduce air pollution.
- Air quality must be taken into account not just in infrastructure but also the delivery of services – the procurement regime when the UK has left the EU must allow and encourage local authorities and other public bodies to require contractors to use low emissions plant and vehicles.
- If local authorities are to be expected to play a greater role in tackling air pollution it is important that they are given the powers and funding to do so, any new duties need additional resources to cover the full cost.
- We need to consider which level of local government should play the lead role – currently in two-tier areas district councils have environmental health responsibilities (including air quality management areas) but county councils have transport and public health roles. There is a strong case for giving transport authorities the lead role and a duty to co-ordinate the actions of other agencies, as with the Lead Local Flood Authority role established in 2010. However, where new duties or roles are being assigned new funding for these duties and roles must be provided.

One of the things that ADEPT can offer going forward is to engage with our network of corporate partners to help understand how the Clean Air Strategy might reflect the experience of major providers in key service sectors.

We look forward to the outcome of the consultation and to our continued dialogue with you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paula R. Hewitt". The signature is written in a cursive style with a period at the end.

Paula Hewitt
Vice-President and Chair of the Environment Board

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Ashworth". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Mike Ashworth
Chair of the Transport Board

ADEPT

Understanding the problem

Q1. What do you think about the actions put forward in the understanding the problem chapter?

We wholeheartedly support the Government's commitment to a process of continuously improving the evidence base on air quality in the UK and to ensuring this evidence is accessible and transparent to a wide range of audiences from academic experts, health professionals, school children and other vulnerable individuals. We are pleased to see investment of £10m in improving modelling, data and analytical tools to give a more precise picture of current and future air quality and the impact of policies to improve it in future. We support the commitment to increase transparency by bringing local and national monitoring data together into a single accessible portal for information on air quality monitoring and modelling that people can use easily.

The draft Strategy notes that we have statutory obligations to keep concentrations of specified pollutants below certain levels, and the only area in which we are not currently meeting these limits is in relation to roadside nitrogen dioxide concentrations. Reducing emissions from transport should be the top priority for further research, focussing on modal shift – how best to enable and encourage people to get out of their vehicles and use active travel (walking and cycling) and public transport instead. This is essential for improving air quality, improving the environment, and delivering health benefits.

Q2. How can we improve the accessibility of evidence on air quality, so that it meets the wide-ranging needs of the public and other interested parties?

In addition to providing better access to information there needs to be more emphasis on informing people about how their choices and behaviour can increase air pollution. Modal shift is essential to reduce private vehicle usage. Other more targeted messages are also needed, for example we note below that there should be more driver education about the impact that high speeds, harsh braking and engines idling have on increasing emissions.

Health

Q3. What do you think of the package of actions put forward in the health chapter?

With regards to the health impacts of air pollution, we agree that this is a national health emergency and that more needs to be done. However, there is a fracture of policy between transport and health both nationally and locally and this needs to be addressed. Sustainable transport not only has an impact on air quality, but also helps to tackle obesity and mental health, in both children and adults. Actions to reduce air pollution also have a positive effect on health outcomes.

Air pollution is not just a health issue, it is a health inequality issue that has a disproportionate impact on children and on the people who live in our poorest communities.

We support the proposed actions set out in this chapter, particularly the plan to publish a new set of appraisal tools and accompanying guidance to enable the health impacts of air pollution to be considered in every relevant policy decision that is made. These must be more than just advisory: Government departments, local authorities, health authorities and other public bodies should be required to identify and take account of the impact of their decision-making on air quality. This should apply to creating new assets and infrastructure, and to the management and operation of service delivery. Public authorities should be required to use their leverage as commissioners and purchasers of goods and services from other sectors to secure outcomes with the best net impact on air quality.

As Place Directors, we work closely with public health to plan sustainable and healthy places to live and work. We support the drive to increase the number of new homes being provided in all sectors, but this must not be at the cost of failing to plan properly and provide the infrastructure that will help reduce air pollution in the future.

The health sector has important roles to play in reducing its own contribution to air pollution through transport emissions and in communicating with the public. We support the aim of embedding knowledge about air quality into the training of health professionals.

Q4. How can we improve the way we communicate with the public about poor air quality and what people can do?

See comments under questions 2 and 3 above. This is not just about targeting vulnerable people with immediate information about high levels of air pollution and what they can do to protect themselves in the short term, it is also about communicating with the whole population about how their choices and behaviours can increase pollution and what they should do to reduce this and to improve their health.

Environment

Q5. What do you think of the actions put forward in the environment chapter?

Clean air is a vital part of our environment. We are pleased to see recognition that:

“In the past, pollution was sometimes seen as a price we had to pay for progress, but that is outdated thinking. **We now know that clean, green and healthy environments in urban and rural areas are an essential component of progress, not a barrier to economic development.** We have set out our vision for a Green Brexit in which environmental standards are not only maintained but enhanced.”

Earlier this month we responded to the DEFRA consultation on environmental governance and regulation post-Brexit: [here](#) .

We welcome and support the ambition for the Environmental Principles & Governance Bill and hope to contribute to the thinking around the emerging draft

legislation. We have suggested some additional environmental principles – international co-operation, non-regression, and meeting climate change targets – and an additional objective for the new environmental watchdog body that it should be world-leading. The new body should have robust powers and mechanisms to protect the environment.

In respect of the specific proposal to provide guidance for local authorities explaining how cumulative impacts of nitrogen deposition on natural habitats should be mitigated and assessed through the planning system, we understand that Natural England already comment on this through the planning system. As such it is not clear as to why this should become a matter for local authorities with all the associated issues of resource that it would entail.

Clean growth and innovation

Q7. What do you think of the package of actions put forward in the clean growth and innovation chapter?

We strongly support the Clean Growth Strategy to decarbonise the UK economy as rapidly as possible and the Government's ambition make the UK a world leader in the goods and services focused on tackling air pollution, such as abatement technology, monitoring equipment and modelling skills.

Q8. In what areas of the air quality industry is there potential for UK leadership?

Zero and ultra-low emissions vehicles. Renewable energy generation and storage. The role of green infrastructure in towns and cities in reducing pollution.

Q9. In your view, what are the barriers to the take-up of existing technologies which can help tackle air pollution? How can these barriers be overcome?

The lack of a clear Government initiative on this matter is a major barrier. A national complementary infrastructure of electric vehicle recharging points and hydrogen refuelling stations would pump prime the zero/low emission vehicle take up with an immediate effect on air quality and, ultimately, sustainability.

Transport

Q11. What do you think of the package of actions put forward in the transport chapter?

There is very little mention of **freight** within this strategy, apart from prioritising a shift from road to rail freight (see below). There has been an increase in the numbers of light goods vehicle movements in recent years due to changes in the way people shop. There needs to be more consideration of how emerging technology, such as drone delivery and autonomous last mile delivery, can be used to improve freight delivery and reduce the reliance on traditional vehicle transport.

In respect of **road transport**, we appreciate that the majority of measures to reduce the air pollution from transportation are included in the Road to Zero Strategy.

However, with the action proposed in this strategy, we would like to know whether the new international regulations will apply to all road vehicles?

There is a need for more driver education to change behaviour to help reduce emissions. Some driver behaviours including harsh braking, high speeds, and engines running when stationary, cause higher emissions.

We believe that there may be a causal link between the condition of our roads and the level of emissions – roads in disrepair are likely to cause higher emissions – and there is a need for further research to look into this. ADEPT is currently preparing a policy position statement on highways maintenance and we will be pleased to forward this when it is published next month. We believe that local roads are a significant national asset that need long-term management and investment. The funding regime must be fit for this purpose, rather than seeking short-term fixes. The current funding system for local roads is broken, with multiple uncoordinated funding streams providing an inefficient and inadequate way of financing maintenance. ADEPT is looking for sustainable, long term and devolved funding that is aligned with Asset Management Plans.

With the **maritime** sector, although ADEPT agrees with the measures to improve air quality at ports, we do have some concerns.

- Although it is good that there will be standards for domestic ships, what will the standards be for freight ships?
- In addition, why are we not using international emissions standards already?
- Have any studies been completed that show that Emissions Control Areas have an impact and that it is the right impact? This needs to be investigated prior to the scheme extending any further.

Regarding the plan for all major English ports to produce Air Quality Strategies, we agree that this is good practice but this should be within a national framework to ensure consistency and avoid creating a new dimension of competition between ports. We would like some clarification on what constitutes a major port. Will this be determined by the number of movements, the existing air pollution levels or the impact on the local population? ADEPT believe that the latter should hold as much weight as a large port in a rural location with little local populace will have less air quality impact on health than a smaller port with a dense populous. Additionally, it is not just the ships themselves that can cause air pollution issues at ports it is also the road traffic, including freight, that travels to and from ports. Freight in particular can have impacts elsewhere due to the location of designated layover points. This will need to be included in any assessment of port air quality strategies.

With **rail**, ADEPT welcome the research into alternative fuels, but have some concerns:

- How will the hydrogen be produced?
- Does this mean electrification is no longer a priority? This is not mentioned as an alternative here but it is stated later in the strategy that “modal shift to rail, particularly on electrified lines, can help to reduce road traffic congestion and emissions.”

Additionally, we agree that more research needs to be done on air quality at stations. However, much like the Air Quality Strategies for ports, how will the range of stations be identified? We recommend that it is based on the impacts on people rather than just on numbers of movements.

With **aviation**, we support the development of an Aviation Strategy. We hope this will also take into account movements to and from airports as well as just the aeroplanes.

With regard to **modal shift** for freight we welcome the priority to transfer road freight to rail freight. We recognise that the potential for this is constrained by the coverage of the rail network and the need to identify appropriate sites for freight depots in the face of competing requirements for land. We would urge the Government to investigate other options for modal shift.

More generally though, we feel that the Government has failed to recognise the importance of how modal shift in transport impacts air quality. The draft strategy is not ambitious enough when it comes to bold new initiatives to reduce reliance on private vehicles, move swiftly reduce the number of diesel vehicle on our roads, to promote active travel and support public transport. Again, we appreciate that there may be more about this in the Road to Zero strategy, however there needs to be more focus on this. For example, there is a cross over between road transport and rail transport, as many who commute using trains still use cars to travel to and from the station. There needs to be more encouragement of active travel and support for public transport to enable people to switch to walking, cycling or using the bus to get to and from trains.

Part of the issue is a lack of funding for modal shift initiatives, which in turn means there is a lack of infrastructure. The investment committed by Government may limit the geographic extent to which modal shift can effectively address air quality. ADEPT feels that funding to improve modal shift should be distributed to areas identified that have the worst air pollution and highest car use.

Better infrastructure is needed to encourage cleaner vehicles and active travel. As we plan sustainable and healthy places for the future, new developments must include this infrastructure. The Cycle City Ambition programme is exclusive to 6 cities and we are unclear where the £1.2bn being invested in cycling and walking between 2016-21 is as we are not aware of any notable grant programmes funds, specifically aimed at doubling cycling by 2025 (extracting the cycling and walking expenditure from Growth Deal and NPIF projects is probably making up some of this investment). Similarly, the £1.7bn Transforming Cities Fund was targeted at cities with 200,000 workday population and so will exclude many cities with air quality exceedances.

At home

Q13. What do you think of the package of actions put forward to reduce the impact of domestic combustion?

We support these actions. It is right that there should be a nationwide approach to smoke control which can be built upon as appropriate by local authorities. The principle of producer responsibility is an important one as we cannot expect all consumers to make informed choices at the point of purchase, so it is right that only those stoves and boilers with the lowest emissions should be manufactured, imported and installed. The testing of appliances needs to be realistic, rigorous and transparent to avoid any repeat of the well-publicised manipulation of data by some major vehicle producers. Government should phase out the sale of the most polluting domestic fuels, and make producers and retailers responsible for ensuring that only relatively clean and ready to burn fuels are sold. Voluntary industry initiatives are not enough, there will always be some producers and retailers who take a self-interested and short-term approach and cut corners in order to profit.

Q14. Which of the following measures to provide information on a product's non-methane volatile organic compound content would you find most helpful for informing your choice of household and personal care products, and please would you briefly explain your answer?

- *“A B C” label on product packaging (a categorised product rating for relevant domestic products, similar to other labels such as food traffic light labels)*
- *information on manufacturer website*
- *leaflet at the point of sale*
- *inclusion in advertising campaigns*
- *other option.*

Labels on products are vital to help consumers make informed choices not just at the point of sale but also at the point of use. Other sources of information might reinforce this but cannot replace it.

Q15. What further actions do you think can be taken to reduce human exposure from indoor air pollution?

Possibly a requirement for gas cookers and hobs to be fitted with extraction hoods to reduce exposure to internal products of combustion, the most notable of which is nitrogen dioxide.

Farming

Q16. What do you think of the package of actions put forward in the farming chapter?

We have no specific comments on the proposed actions to reduce emissions from agriculture, but in general we strongly support the Government's ambition set out in the 25 Year Environment Plan to have a new environmental land management system when the UK has left the EU, in which financial support to farmers is focussed on delivering improvements to the environment. This should include the highest international standards for ensuring that farming methods do not damage our air, land and water.

That being said the measures put forward are essentially with respect to containment. Therefore it is suggested that this should be supplemented with abatement to prevent the pollutants being vented to atmosphere when the cover is removed.

Q18. Should future anaerobic digestion (AD) supported by government schemes be required to use best practice low emissions spreading techniques through certification? If not, what other short-term strategies to reduce ammonia emissions from AD should be implemented? Please provide any evidence you have to support your suggestions

We have no specific comment on farming techniques but support the principle of enforcing best practice in emissions reduction. Digestate is also produced from AD in the treatment of domestic and commercial food waste, and we would expect the same standards to apply.

Industry

Q19. What do you think of the package of actions put forward in the industry chapter?

We have no specific comments on the proposed actions to reduce emissions from industry. We support the broad approach of continuous improvement to reduce industrial emissions, within a clear framework that gives certainty to businesses for their investment decisions. As the UK leaves the EU, it will be important to maintain pollution controls that are at least as robust as those of the EU27.

Leadership at all levels

Q25. What do you think of the package of actions put forward in the leadership chapter?

Air quality is a national issue and it is a concern that the Government response to it is being steered towards local rather than national leadership and actions. The 2017 consultation on NO₂ exceedances was framed on the basis that most of the action to address the problem is down to local authorities. In our view, this is an arm's length approach which offers little leadership and support for what may be some challenging actions.

Q26. Do you feel that the England-wide legislative package set out in 9.2.2 is appropriate? Why/why not?

We strongly support the proposal to bring forward new clean air legislation at the earliest opportunity, to provide a more coherent framework for national and local action to tackle air pollution.

Q27. Are there gaps in the powers available to local government for tackling local air problems? If so, what are they?

To reiterate the general point: if local authorities are to be expected to play a greater role in tackling air pollution it is important that they are given the powers and funding to do so, any new duties need additional resources to cover the full cost.

With regard to specifics, we would like to discuss the need for powers to tackle air pollution around schools by closing roads or diverting traffic (to protect children's health as they are more vulnerable, and childhood exposure causes health problems later in life), the extent of powers to enforce traffic movements more generally, and the extension of workplace parking levies.

Q28. What are the benefits of making changes to the balance of responsibility for clean local air between lower and upper tier authorities? What are the risks?

We need to consider which level of local government should play the lead role – currently in two-tier areas district councils have environmental health responsibilities (including air quality management areas) but county councils have transport and public health roles. Because they are more strategic and due to the link between transport emissions and air pollution, there is a strong case for giving transport authorities the lead role and a duty to co-ordinate the actions of other agencies, as with the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) role established eight years ago.

There is a strong parallel between air quality and flood risk management – complex issues that cross boundaries, with many stakeholders and diverse powers, and a need for co-ordination. The Flood and Water Management Act gave LLFAs the duty to assess the local flood risk, set out objectives for managing local flooding, list the costs and benefits of measures proposed to meet these objectives, and how the measures will be paid for. Other bodies were given the duty to co-operate with LLFAs to do this. A similar approach in respect of air pollution would give greater clarity and accountability, and a more strategic view locally.

Q29. What improvements should be made to the Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) system? How can we minimise the bureaucracy and reporting burdens associated with LAQM?

Air quality management areas can be very small, there may be multiple AQMAs locally across a number of district council areas with no wider strategy or co-ordination. Our suggestion above (question 28) provides a way forward.

Strategy overall

Please refer to the general comments in our covering letter.