

LOCAL AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN WALES

Welsh Government update

On 13 September 2016 the Welsh Government launched a 12-week public consultation on local air quality and noise management in Wales.

There were two objectives for the consultation. First, it sought views on 15 specific proposals. These focused primarily on refreshing, through new statutory guidance, the local air quality management (LAQM) regime established by the Environment Act 1995. This long-standing, UK-wide system requires Local Authorities to monitor air quality, identify areas non-compliant with the national air quality objectives and implement local air quality action plans leading to compliance with those objectives. While LAQM has been successful in identifying a large number of pollution hotspots, it has had limited success in eradicating them and there is a clear need to break down the barriers to effective action in this area. The proposals in the consultation stressed the importance of policy integration and collaboration and the immediate and long-term health benefits to be gained by reducing pollution exposure across the entire population at the same time as taking action on localised pollution hotspots.

The majority of the 50 responses received were broadly supportive of the proposed direction of travel in terms of air quality policy, and the Welsh Government therefore intends to take forward the majority of its proposals as outlined in the consultation document, providing further clarification in the form of revised policy guidance where necessary. The principal changes made to the proposals as set out in the consultation document relate to the deadline for Local Authorities submitting annual progress reports (this will now be 30 September) and the timescale envisaged for producing the new annual progress report template (this will be introduced for use by Local Authorities in 2018 rather than in 2017).

The second element of the consultation exercise asked what else should be done to tackle airborne pollution. The Welsh Government has grouped the responses to this part into two broad categories, those relating to planning policy and guidance and those relating to other matters.

The responses received on the subject of planning policy and guidance will be taken into account in the upcoming revision of Planning Policy Wales and the production of Wales' first National Development Framework. These responses included a call for the production of national guidance on planning in relation to air quality. Guidance can play an important role in preventing unacceptable levels of air pollution from arising as a consequence of development, and the Welsh Government will give further consideration to this matter in due course.

A wide range of additional comments were received relating neither to the 15 specific proposals in the consultation document nor to planning matters. These will assist in informing the Welsh Government's air quality and noise priorities in the remainder of this Assembly term. The Welsh Government has responded to a number of the suggestions received under this heading in its summary of the consultation exercise. Others will require more time to consider in full.

Alongside these responses to its own recent consultation, the Welsh Government will consider responses to a consultation being carried out jointly with the other UK administrations on a new air quality plan to achieve the EU nitrogen dioxide limit values for Wales and the rest of the UK within the shortest possible time.

The Welsh Government's consultation document on local air quality and noise management, the responses to this consultation and the Welsh Government's summary of the consultation exercise may all be found here:

<https://ymgyngoriadau.llyw.cymru/ymgyngoriadau/rheoli-ansawdd-aer-swn-yng-nghymru> (Cymraeg)

<https://consultations.gov.wales/consultations/air-quality-and-noise-management-wales> (English)

If you have any questions on how LAQM is changing in Wales, please e-mail eqr@wales.gsi.gov.uk.