

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)

AQF 5/06

AIR QUALITY STRATEGY REVIEW CONSULTATION DOCUMENT – SUMMARY REPORT ON STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP 9 JUNE 2006

1. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), together with the devolved administrations (DAs) for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and the National Society for Clean Air and Environmental Protection, hosted a one-day multi-stakeholder workshop in London on 9 June 2006.
2. The workshop provided stakeholders with further information and clarification on the Consultation Document on the Review of the Air Quality Strategy, published on 5 April, and the opportunity to discuss the proposals ahead of their formal response requested by 11 July 2006. Over 120 delegates attended representing environmental and health groups, industry and transport sectors, local authorities, consultancies and research organisations.
3. The morning session consisted of presentations by John Rea (Defra) on the Scope and Vision of the Review; by John Stedman (National Environmental Technology Centre) and Paro Konar (Defra) on the additional policy measures proposed in the consultation document and the associated cost and benefit assessment; and by Martin Williams (Defra) on the Review of the Strategy's current objectives, new objective for particles and the exposure reduction approach. These were followed by a question and answer session.
4. For the afternoon session, delegates formed into five groups to discuss the key questions in the consultation document. These focussed on methodology used to assess the proposed measures, which measures should be taken forward, if there were other measures which should be looked at, whether to retain the current objectives, adoption of new objectives for protection of ecosystems, a move towards a new exposure reduction approach to control small particulates, the inclusion of an objective for PM_{2.5} and at what level the new approach should be implemented – UK wide, devolved administration or at local authority level.

Main Messages from Group Discussions

General

5. Participants felt that the final version of the Strategy should give a more strategic view, differentiating proposed actions (such as the early uptake of Euro standards) and the strategic approach into which this fits (a long term vision). It was suggested the Strategy should reflect UK Government actions, not just Defra/DAs. It should include more on local and regional issues, explain how the Strategy relates to the local level and give greater recognition of what local action can achieve at the local level.

Measures and their assessment

6. There was general support for the measures chosen and short listed. But poor cost and benefit analysis (CBA) should not necessarily relegate a measure from the list, e.g. low emission zone.

7. There were some concerns over the weighting given to CBA, with reference to the other assessment methods. Some considered a better understanding is needed for the sensitivity of the CBA assessment to estimated control costs, and how this would affect the Red/Amber/Green status.

8. Some thought it would be helpful if the Strategy explained the likely implementation routes for the proposed measures. It was suggested that the measures should also be assessed by timing, practicability, geographical scale of effect (e.g. hotspots or general). Some felt early action was needed to deal with ammonia emissions. Traffic reduction, reduced need to travel, incentivisation of public transport should also feature more in the Strategy.

Objectives

10. There was mixed support for retaining the Strategy's existing objectives. Industry sector question the justification for objectives, which go beyond European obligations and why other objectives, which are being met, are still needed. There was general support for a move toward PM_{2.5} in addition to PM₁₀. There was a good deal of interest in the proposals for protection of ecosystems and vegetation, however views were divided between support for the proposals and that they weren't sufficiently challenging.

Exposure Reduction

11. There was general support for the new approach. Many local authorities in particular would like to have a role in the system. Some considered the devolved administrations should also have a role, through spatial development plans. It was considered that if the exposure reduction approach was widened, it could affect local land use planning mechanisms, which are strongly influenced by objective/limit value exceedence. There were some suggestions that the proposed concentration cap for PM_{2.5} should either address hotspots, or another mechanism should be found. Views were also divided on whether the UK should proceed in advance of the EU. The question was raised as to the practicability of introducing emission reduction measures in advance of a EU timetable.

Conclusion

12. In closing, the chairman considered there was a general feeling among delegates that the event had been a success and provided stakeholders with opportunity to debate the proposals in the Consultation Document and for

Defra and the devolved administrations to respond to points of information. Stakeholders were asked to send formal comments by 11 July. Defra and the devolved administrations will give consideration to points raised by stakeholders in drafting the new Air Quality Strategy.

13. This summary of the workshop together with details of discussions in the five breakout groups, are available on the Defra website.

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/airquality/forum/meetings/index.htm>

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August 2006