



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Air Quality: Consultation on the draft revised national Air Quality Strategy

April 2023

We are the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. We're responsible for improving and protecting the environment, growing the green economy, sustaining thriving rural communities and supporting our world-class food, farming and fishing industries.

We work closely with our 33 agencies and arm's length bodies on our ambition to make our air purer, our water cleaner, our land greener and our food more sustainable. Our mission is to restore and enhance the environment for the next generation, and to leave the environment in a better state than we found it.



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About this consultation.....	4
Overview	4
Context	4
PM _{2.5} target implementation.....	5
Alignment of air quality reporting zones with local government boundaries	5
Aim of the consultation.....	5
General information and how to respond	6
Duration.....	6
Responding to this consultation.....	6
Consultation questions.....	8
Introduction.....	8
Confidentiality question	8
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	8
Chapter 2: How air quality fits with local objectives	8
Chapter 3: Air quality standards and objectives.....	8
Chapter 4: Framework for action	8
Chapter 5: Summary of powers available to local authorities	9
Chapter 6: PM _{2.5} Target Implementation.....	10
Consultee Feedback on the Online Survey	11
At the end of the consultation	11

About this consultation

Overview

The UK Government recognises that there is more to do to protect people and the environment from the effects of air pollution, which is why we are taking significant and wide-ranging action to drive improvements to air quality. Air quality in the UK has improved significantly in recent decades. We have seen a decrease in all five major air pollutants: for instance, emissions of fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}), the most damaging pollutant to human health, decreased by 18% between 2010 and 2020. Reductions in these pollutants have produced significant benefits for our health and environment. However, effective action is needed at all levels and there is a key role for local government in identifying and targeting measures to improve air quality in their areas.

The Air Quality Strategy sets out the actions the government expects local authorities to take in support of achieving our long-term air quality goals, including our ambitious new PM_{2.5} targets. It provides a framework to enable local authorities to make the best use of their powers and deliver for their communities.

Context

The Environment Act 1995 (as amended by the Environment Act 2021) requires the government to produce a national Air Quality Strategy setting out air quality standards, objectives for air pollutant restrictions, and measures to be taken by local authorities and others for improving ambient air quality. The last comprehensive review of the strategy was published in 2007, with minor changes made in 2011. The Government is consulting on a replacement for the 2007 strategy.

The draft strategy being consulted on applies to England only, including London Boroughs.

There is an existing suite of air quality publications which local authorities can refer to, including the 2023 National Air Pollution Control Programme [hyperlink], [2019 Clean Air Strategy](#), the [2022 Local Air Quality Management Statutory Guidance](#) and the [2023 Environmental Improvement Plan](#). These documents set out actions that the UK Government will take to improve our air quality. The Air Quality Strategy complements rather than replicates or replaces these publications, and is a locally-focused document to enable local authorities to clearly understand their role, responsibilities and powers relating to air quality. The Strategy sets out a strong support and capability-building framework to ensure local authorities have the necessary tools to take local action, supporting progress towards local and national targets.

PM_{2.5} target implementation

Following on from our landmark Environment Act, the government has set two ambitious, legally-binding targets to reduce concentrations of PM_{2.5}:

- an annual mean concentration target for PM_{2.5} of 10 µg/m³ across England by 2040
- a population exposure reduction target of 35% by 2040 compared to a 2018 baseline.

We also set out an interim target for each long-term target in our Environmental Improvement Plan: to reach 12 µg/m³ annual mean concentration of PM_{2.5} by January 2028 and reduce average population exposure to PM_{2.5} by 22% by January 2028, compared to a 2018 baseline.

Having set these ambitious targets, we are now turning to implementation including how other bodies should take them into account in decision-making. The Air Quality Strategy is being used to set out and convey the principles of the approach that local authorities are expected to take.

Wider planning reforms are currently underway, being led by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). Planning reforms are being partly delivered through the Levelling up and Regeneration Bill and partly through reviews of national planning policy. Proposals for potential reform to planning policy proposed by this strategy, may be subject to various further government consultations as part of these wider reforms. This strategy does not pre-empt the outcomes of wider planning reforms, nor the outcome of any supporting government consultations. Defra will continue to work with DLUHC to consider this strategy, and responses to it, as part of the wider planning reforms.

Alignment of air quality reporting zones with local government boundaries

In our Environmental Improvement Plan, we committed to re-align regional air quality zones in line with local government boundaries to drive effective coordinated action. We want to make it easier for local authorities to identify their role in addressing areas of non-compliance which are monitored under England's Air Quality Standards Regulations (2010). This will empower local authorities to deliver localised solutions as key delivery partners in meeting our legal limits and targets.

Aim of the consultation

This consultation seeks views on the revised draft Air Quality Strategy. We will use the responses to this consultation to help inform the final Air Quality Strategy due to be published later this year. While we are particularly interested in views from local authorities and other local partners, we would welcome responses from all other interested

parties and the wider public. There are 17 consultation questions in total. There are 3 introductory questions, 1 confidentiality question, 11 questions on the chapters in the Strategy, and 1 feedback question on the online consultation tool (Citizen Space).

- Introduction (questions 1 to 3)
- Confidentiality question (question 4)
- Chapter 4: Framework for Action (question 5)
- Chapter 5: Summary of powers available to local authorities (questions 6 to 13)
- Chapter 6 PM_{2.5} target implementation (questions 14 to 16)
- Consultee Feedback on the online consultation tool (question 17)

General information and how to respond

Duration

This consultation runs for 2 weeks. It opens on 11 April 2023 and closes on 21 April 2023.

Responding to this consultation

We encourage responses via an online survey on Citizen Space, an online consultation tool. Consultations receive a high level of interest across many sectors and using the online tool assists our analysis of responses, enabling more efficient and effective consideration of issues. However, responses can be sent by email or post. In your response please state:

- your name
- your email address
- your organisation (if applicable)
- whether you would like your response to be confidential (if yes, please state your reasons)

Enquiries and responses should be directed:

- by email to AQSreview@defra.gov.uk including whether you need a hard copy of the consultation
- in writing to the Consultation Coordinator, Defra, 2nd Floor, Foss House, Kings Pool, 1-2 Peasholme Green, York, YO1 7PX

When considering responses to this consultation, the government will give greater weight to responses that are based on argument and evidence, rather than simple expressions of support or opposition.

Confidentiality and data protection information

A summary of responses to this consultation will be published on the government website at: www.gov.uk/defra. An annex to the consultation summary will list all organisations that responded but will not include personal names, addresses or other contact details.

Defra may publish the content of your response to this consultation to make it available to the public without your personal name and private contact details (home address and email address).

If you click on 'Yes' in response to the question asking if you would like anything in your response to be kept confidential, you are asked to state clearly what information you would like to be kept as confidential and explain your reasons for confidentiality. The reason for this is that information in responses to this consultation may be subject to release to the public or other parties in accordance with the access to information law (these are primarily the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIRs), the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA)).

We have obligations, mainly under the EIRs, FOIA and DPA, to disclose information to particular recipients or to the public in certain circumstances. In view of this, your explanation of your reasons for requesting confidentiality for all or part of your response would help us balance these obligations for disclosure against any obligation of confidentiality. If we receive a request for the information that you have provided in your response to this consultation, we will take full account of your reasons for requesting confidentiality of your response, but we cannot guarantee that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances.

If you click on 'No' in response to the question asking if you would like anything in your response to be kept confidential, we will be able to release the content of your response to the public, but we won't make your personal name and private contact details publicly available.

There may be occasions when Defra will share the information you provide in response to the consultation, including any personal data with external analysts. This is for the purposes of consultation response analysis and provision of a report of the summary of responses only.

This consultation is being conducted in line with the Cabinet Office 'Consultation Principles' and be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/consultationprinciples-guidance> .

Please find our latest privacy notice uploaded as a related document alongside our consultation document. If you have any comments or complaints about the consultation process, please address them to:

Air Quality Strategy review,
Consultation Coordinator, Defra
2nd Floor, Foss House, Kings Pool,
1-2 Peasholme Green, York, YO1 7PX
Or email: consultation.coordinator@defra.gov.uk

Consultation questions

Introduction

Question 1: What is your name?

Question 2: What is your email address?

Question 3: What is your organisation?

Confidentiality question

Question 4: Would you like your response to be confidential?

Yes

No

If you answered 'Yes', please provide your reason.

Chapter 1: Introduction

No questions.

Chapter 2: How air quality fits with local objectives

No questions.

Chapter 3: Air quality standards and objectives

No questions.

Chapter 4: Framework for action

Question 5: To what extent do you agree or disagree with our commitment to better align air quality reporting zones with local government boundaries?

Strongly agree

Somewhat agree

Neither agree or disagree

Somewhat disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know or no opinion

Chapter 5: Summary of powers available to local authorities

Domestic Burning

Question 6: What more could local authorities do within the existing regulatory framework to reduce pollution from inappropriate domestic burning?

Question 12 deals with potential changes to the regulatory framework.

Please provide details.

Industrial Emissions

Question 7: How do you feel local authorities can most effectively reduce pollution from industrial sources they are responsible for?

Please provide details.

Transport

Question 8: How do you feel local authorities can most effectively reduce pollution from transport and non-road mobile machinery (NRMM)?

Please provide details.

Agriculture

Question 9: How do you feel local authorities can most effectively reduce pollution from agriculture?

Please provide details

Indoor air quality

Question 10: How do you feel local authorities can most effectively improve indoor air quality?

Please provide details.

Communicating air quality information

Question 11: How do you feel local authorities can most effectively communicate air quality information?

Please provide details.

Additional powers & support

Question 12: Do you feel that there are additional powers relating to air quality which should be available to local authorities?

Yes. If yes, please provide details.

No.

Question 13: What further support could government provide to help with actions taken locally to tackle air quality?

- Increased guidance
 - If so, in which area (please specify)
- Face to face teach ins on topics
 - If so, on which topic (please specify)
- Virtual teach-ins on topics
 - If so, on which topic (please specify)
- Enforcement pro-formas/templates
 - If so, in which area (please specify)
- Sharing space/website for best practice examples of local working
- Knowledge hub inc assets for local authorities
- Other (please specify)

Chapter 6: PM2.5 Target Implementation

Question 14: To what extent do you agree or disagree that a new approach needs to be employed to promote consideration of the PM2.5 targets in the planning system?

Strongly agree

Somewhat agree

Neither agree or disagree

Somewhat disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know or no opinion

Please add any additional comments

Question 15: What do you think are the merits or drawbacks of a design-stage emission prevention approach as set out in this chapter?

Please provide details.

Question 16: Are there any additional assessment approaches or points we should consider when developing proposals to integrate the PM2.5 targets in the planning system?

Yes, please provide details.

No

Consultee Feedback on the Online Survey

Question 17: Overall, how satisfied are you with our online consultation tool? Please give us any comments you have on the tool, including suggestions on how we could improve it.

Very satisfied

Satisfied

Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

Dissatisfied

Very dissatisfied

Don't know

At the end of the consultation

When this consultation ends, we will keep copies securely. Members of the public may ask for a copy of responses under freedom of information legislation. If you do not want your response - including your name, contact details and any other personal information – to be publicly available, please say so clearly in writing when you send your response to the consultation. Please note, if your computer automatically includes a confidentiality disclaimer, that won't count as a confidentiality request. Please explain why you need to keep details confidential. We will take your reasons into account if someone asks for this information under freedom of information legislation. But, because of the law, we cannot promise that we will always be able to keep those details confidential. We will summarise all responses and place this summary on our website at www.gov.uk/defra. This summary will include a list of names of organisations that responded but not people's personal names, addresses or other contact details. Please give us 24 hours' notice if you wish to

see consultation responses and summaries. There is a charge for photocopying and postage.

If you have any comments or complaints about the consultation process, please address them to:

Defra Consultation Co-ordinator, 2nd Floor, Foss House, Kings Pool, 1-2 Peasholme Green, York, YO1 7PX., or email: consultation.coordinator@defra.gov.uk.