

Title of Report: Clean Air Strategy for Northern Ireland – DAERA Public Discussion Document	Officer Presenting: Director of Health and Community Author: Head of Health and Community Wellbeing
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1 Purpose of Report/Recommendations

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Members' views on the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) Public Discussion Document on a Clean Air Strategy for Northern Ireland. Members are asked to consider and approve the draft responses to the questions that are posed within the Public Discussion Document (Appendix 1).
- 1.2 To provide Members with and update on actions associated with a Council motion on air quality in October 2020 (Appendix 2).

2 Background

- 2.1 DAERA has produced a public Discussion Document which forms part of a two-stage approach to developing the first Clean Air Strategy for Northern Ireland.
- 2.2 The Discussion Document presents evidence and research on a range of ambient air pollutants and is designed to give stakeholders the opportunity to share their opinions on a wide range of air quality issues facing Northern Ireland.

3 Key Issues

- 3.1 The Discussion Document is set out in a number of chapters that provide information on pollutants of concern, sources of emissions including road transport, households, agriculture and industry. The Discussion Document reviews the current arrangements for local air quality management and communication of air quality information.
- 3.2 It is recommended that clear policy measures should be identified in the Clean Air Strategy defining actions to ensure the WHO guidelines for particulate matter are met. This is likely to require enhanced monitoring to ensure that these guidelines are achieved with future and current air monitoring needs to be financially supported by the Department.

- 3.3 Air quality within Derry City and Strabane District Council (DCSDC) area continues to meet the relevant air quality objectives at locations of relevant exposure, with the exception of locations within existing Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs). These AQMAs have been declared for the exceedance of the Nitrogen Dioxide annual mean limit of 40 ug/m³. The source of Nitrogen Dioxide at these locations is road transport. These AQMAs are located at Creggan Road, Bunrana Road, Dales Corner and Spencer Road. The Discussion Document indicates that Councils should look at extending AQMAs to cover the whole Council area and introduce the concept of Low Emission Zones.
- 3.4 There are a number of smoke control areas within DCSDC and these are located in Strabane town, Castlederg and Newtownstewart. Within these areas controls are placed on the fuel (smokeless only) a household can use so as to control emissions of fine particulate matter. Air quality issues do arise on occasions in the Council area associated with the secondary burning of coal. This leads to an increase in particulate matter which can have a detrimental impact on health. These incidents usually occur in the evening and have been detected at air monitors in Strabane and at Rosemount. They are generally associated with winter episodes of cold calm weather with increased domestic burning of solid fuels. The Discussion Document refers to exceedance of the Target Value for Benzo(a)pyrene, a Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAH) associated with emissions from domestic solid fuel burning. This pollutant is monitored at three sites across Northern Ireland including at the Brandywell where exceedance of the target level has been detected in 2010 and 2016.
- 3.5 The Discussion Document refers to household emissions in relation to particulate matter and suggests Councils could extend existing Smoke Control Areas. Extended and new smoke control areas could be introduced and enforced by Council. This would need grant support for dwellings that need to convert their heating where they have no smokeless form of heating. A ban on the sale of bituminous coal and unseasoned wood is also suggested and this puts greater responsibility on the supplier rather than the consumer. Controlling emissions at source rather than at the consumer is to be recommended as has been demonstrated by the reduction in ambient lead levels following its removal from petrol.
- 3.6 Details of Smoke Control Areas, Air Quality Management Areas and air quality monitoring sites in the Council area are available on the Council website.
- 3.7 The Discussion Document and future Clean Air Strategy is welcomed but needs to address shortcomings in current clean air legislation that dates back to 1981. A new clean air bill should be introduced to support the future clean air strategy. A future strategy needs to incorporate the challenges presented by climate change.

- 3.8 Colleagues within the Council's Planning service have highlighted that within the document there seems to be little emphasis on Planning. Council's own Local Development Plan Strategy, incorporates a substantial section on General Development that apply the principles of the Strategic Planning Policy Statement for NI (SPPS) including air quality.
- 3.9 The Energy Manager within the Environment and Regeneration Directorate has also had an opportunity to review the document and highlighted the need to consider the linkages between Air Quality and Climate Change. The Energy Officer has highlighted Council's own Climate Adaptation Plan, Local Development Plan and forthcoming Regional Energy Strategy/NI Energy Strategy which are to be published later this year, all of which should be referenced within the Clean Air Strategy. Council officers are also currently working on a Green Transition Statement of Intent to emphasise the regions desire to deliver a sustainable future for the region.

4 Financial, Equality, Legal, HR, Improvement, Rural Needs and other Implications

- 4.1 At present the existing document under consideration is only a public discussion document but changes to local air quality management funding may have impacts on Council resources through changes in the departmental grant regime itself, the funding of air monitoring programmes including those not associated with national networks and practical measures to improve air quality.

5 Recommendations

- 5.1 Members consider and approve the draft responses to the questions posed in the Clean Air Strategy Public Discussion Document.

Background Papers

Appendix 1 Draft Responses to Consultation Questions

Appendix 2 Update on Council Motion regarding Air Quality

[DAERA Public Discussion Document on a Clean Air Strategy for Northern Ireland](#)

[Smoke Control Areas and Air Quality Management Areas](#)

[Air quality monitoring sites in the Council area](#)