

Local Air Quality Management Guidance

With regard to climate change the LAQM Policy Guidance in 2003 specifically stated:

"Policies to improve air quality cannot be considered in isolation from those designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, as some policies to improve local air quality can often have the added benefit of producing additional carbon savings, and vice versa. For example, policies designed to reduce the impact that transport has on air quality by tackling congestion and encouraging a shift to public transport, walking and cycling should also reduce carbon dioxide emissions. Measures to improve energy efficiency and cut energy demand should also reduce the air pollutants that are produced during electricity generation."

The current (draft) 2008 Policy Guidance is more explicit about the need to make links:

"In the light of current Government policy, it is particularly important that climate change and air quality policies are joined up. There will be situations where policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions will have benefits for air quality, and vice-versa. However, there may be situations where potential actions and policies do not necessarily achieve these win-win situations. It is essential that technology which is used to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is used in the right place, and not in an area where such technology will impact on the ability of the local authority to work towards air quality objectives....All policies should be given careful consideration to ensure that the benefits for local air quality and climate change are maximised. Without proper consideration, there is the possibility that some policies to mitigate climate change will have a negative impact on air quality and vice-versa. Where practicable, synergistic policies beneficial to both air quality and climate change should be pursued."

Blyth Valley AQ & CC Action Plan



Following their declaration of an Air Quality Management Area in 2004 Blyth Valley Borough Council made the following development:

A joint air quality and climate change action plan was developed. This plan meets the requirements of the LAQM process, which outlines the requirements to target both issues; and an air quality and climate change strategy was developed. The action plan was based around 9 key topics in each of these areas, a number of relevant measures were identified and assessed as to whether they would be beneficial in terms of either air quality, climate change or both.

Linking Air Quality & Climate Change with Health

Officers at Blyth Valley Borough Council already had contacts with Public Health colleagues through the Northumberland Environmental Health Officers Group which comprised senior Environmental Health Officers from the district councils, as well as representatives from the local Health Promotion Service (HPS) and Public Health Trust (PCT). They facilitated the introduction of Climate Change onto the agenda of the EHO group, raised its profile on the agendas of the health bodies and other district councils.

It is hoped that it will be possible to develop joint health and environmental impact assessments, joint health and environmental audits, and extend the links into emergency planning and general planning. The officers at Blyth Valley recognise the fact that communities may put a higher priority on Health and Safety issues, due to the greater proximity and immediacy of many of the issues. The health route can therefore be an important one to open the door to promoting the integration of wider issues such as energy use and climate change. For example, the current agenda on child obesity can really assist the sustainable transport as a key aspect of the wider CC picture.

Air Quality Impacts of Biomass Combustion

Following the development and introduction of the London Energy Plan and the Mayor's Energy Strategy, a number of Borough Councils in London became concerned regarding the possible impacts on air quality that might result from a significant impact in biomass combustion (particularly wood fuels) in London, where there are already widespread problems with both nitrogen dioxide and particle pollution leading to all 33 London Boroughs having had to declare at least one Air Quality Management Area.

London Councils commissioned a consultant to carry out an analysis of the potential risks to air quality. The work highlighted the fact that as well as having a potentially very significant impact on concentrations of NO₂ and PM₁₀ in locations where concentrations were already close to or exceeding government objectives, there are also issues that arise from the need to use road transport to deliver fuel stocks and this may lead to significant increases in Heavy Goods Vehicle movements.

Following this work, Environmental Protection UK and LACORS are working with a range of organisations to develop further guidance and assessment tools to help Local Authorities and developers properly assess the risks.

Whilst biomass combustion can play an important role in reducing carbon emissions, it is very important to use "the right technology in the right place" as stated in Defra's Biomass Strategy.



Reading Borough Council AQ and CC Consultation

In 2007 the Air Quality Management Resource Centre at UWE, Bristol provided Reading Borough Council in carrying out a public consultation programme to support the development of their Air Quality Action Plan and Climate Change Strategy (unlike these are 2 separate policy documents).

The work consisted of a widely disseminated questionnaire and a number of public workshops with members of the public and other key stakeholders. The responses to the consultation clearly showed the need to ensure that measures to adapt to climate change need to be bound to more immediate and local environmental benefits to win the support of the public.

The consultation resulted in 8 key recommendations to the council

The council to take a lead both in terms of managing their own estate and in encouraging supporting and enforcing better practice.

Trying to resolve the traffic issue mainly through demand management

Giving non-car transport a higher (perceived) priority so that people do not feel modes are more dangerous, more expensive or less convenient than using cars

Businesses to be encouraged/forced to take more action both to improve their efficiency, but also to help individuals perform better by, for example, reducing parking spaces

More attention to green spaces to provide pleasant transport corridors for walking and cycling to help increase fitness and well-being and to help mitigate and adapt to climate change

Better quality housing development that ensures low carbon properties at affordable prices uses appropriate land (not gardens, playing fields and other previously green spaces)

Regulation and enforcement to ensure that individual actions take place on a level playing field and so that environmental protection is seen as a necessity rather than an option

'Climate Proofing' Brent's AQ Action Plan

In 2008 the London Borough of Brent commissioned the Air Quality Management Resource Centre at UWE to undertake an assessment of their Air Quality Action Plan. One of the key elements of the assessment was carrying out an analysis of all the proposed measures and evaluating them in terms of their likely climate impact (beneficial, neutral or negative).

Aside from simply following good practice, the evaluation was also linked to the introduction of the new National Indicators under Local Area Agreements. These indicators (for which there are two that relate to climate change emissions and one for conventional air pollution emissions) are making a significant impact on the way Local Authorities are tackling these issues. One result being the need to assess measures more carefully, both in terms of direct intended benefits and incidental impacts.

Although the National Indicators are still young, they are already playing a significant role in directing Local Authority action on Climate Change. This is principally because, unlike air quality, Local Authorities still have no statutory obligations to reduce climate change emissions.

Low Emissions Strategies – Using the Planning System to Reduce Transport Emissions

In 2007/8 a number of English Local Authorities were awarded 'Beacon Status' for their exemplary work on air quality. As part of their subsequent work disseminating Good Practice they set up a Beacons Low Emissions Strategies Working Group that worked with CENEX (The Centre of Excellence for Low Carbon and Fuel Cell Technologies) to develop guidance on how the planning system could be used to encourage the uptake of cleaner fuels and vehicles to complement other design and mitigation options for new developments, such as travel planning and the provision of public transport infrastructure.

The guidance document (released for consultation in June 2008) provides a comprehensive guide to the points in the formal planning process that can be used to help facilitate requirements for less polluting transport to be put in place. In addition to the guidance on how to interact with the planning system, there are also a number of informative case studies demonstrating the types of measures that can be implemented to reduce emissions, including examples of:

