



Department of the Environment
Air and Environmental Quality Unit
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House
44-58 May Street Belfast
BT1 4NN

Telephone: 02890 254730

Email:

Barry.mcauley@doeni.gov.uk

Your ref:

Our ref:

Date: 9th June 2011

Dear Consultee,

CONSULTATION ON AIR QUALITY PLANS TO MEET EU LIMIT VALUES FOR NITROGEN DIOXIDE (NO₂) IN NORTHERN IRELAND.

We are writing to invite views on updated draft air quality plans that set out the action taken and being planned at national, regional and local levels to meet the annual and hourly EU NO₂ limit values in Northern Ireland as soon as possible. These, along with relevant air quality plans from England, Scotland and Wales will form the basis of a UK notification to the European Commission in September. This notification will seek, for those parts of the country where there is sufficient evidence, to postpone for up to 5 years from January 2010 the compliance date for the NO₂ limit values.

This consultation is made up of:

1. A UK overview document summarising the relevant air quality policy background and past, present and planned national measures to help tackle NO₂ pollution. This also includes details of a possible additional measure for a national Low Emission Zone (LEZ) framework that is currently under investigation.
2. A list of UK and national measures that have helped to reduce or are expected to reduce concentrations of NO₂.
3. Draft air quality plans for the air quality zones across the UK where our assessment for 2010 shows that additional time will be needed to meet in full the NO₂ limit values. The plans contain information required by the ambient air quality directive (2008/50/EC), describing for each zone the compliance

situation (based on national assessment) and the regional/local measures¹ that will help to achieve compliance with the NO₂ limit values as soon as possible.

4. A technical report on the modelling and assessment methods used to assess the effectiveness of measures in reducing NO₂ concentrations in each zone.

This consultation is being coordinated by Defra. You can access all of the consultation documents via the Defra consultation webpage: (www.defra.gov.uk/consult/2011/06/09/air-quality/) or the Defra air quality policy page: (www.defra.gov.uk/environment/quality/air/air-quality/eu/).

The air quality plans are hosted on Defra's UK Air website which has been designed to help you find easily the air quality plan for the part of the country you are interested in: (<http://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/library/no2ten>)

These documents are not being published in hard copy. However, if you experience any difficulty in accessing the versions on our website or wish to receive hardcopies, please contact us by email at: EUAirQuality@defra.gsi.gov.uk or barry.mcauley@doeni.gov.uk.

Air quality is a devolved matter and there are separate consultations by the administrations in England, Scotland and Wales.

What we are seeking your views on:

We welcome your comments on this package of draft air quality plans that we intend to submit to the European Commission in September, in particular the extent to which these represent correctly the efforts underway at national, regional and local level to achieve compliance with the NO₂ limits as quickly as possible.

The plans have been drawn up with input from local authorities across the UK, but it is important that they properly reflect the action being taken, so your input is welcome.

Policy Background

The EU Ambient Air Quality Directive (2008/50/EC) sets limits for major air pollutants including nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) with the aim of protecting human health and the environment. Health evidence has shown that at high levels, NO₂ can cause inflammation of the airways and long term exposure may affect lung function and respiratory systems. The current NO₂ limits were introduced in 1999 and had to be achieved by 2010. Road transport is the dominant source of pollution in areas exceeding the limit values.

¹ Details of measures in local air quality plans up to end 2009 are included. The end of 2009 was the cut off date to enable the modelling analysis and timely preparation of the draft air quality plans for each zone.

Based on 2008 projections, compliance with the limit values will have been achieved in 2010 over large parts of the UK. UK emissions of nitrogen oxides (NO_x) fell by 39% between 2000 and 2009 as a result of many measures introduced over the last decade to tackle air pollution. However, the UK, along with most other EU Member States, faces challenges in achieving full compliance in major cities and towns. These challenges have increased since agreement of the current Directive in 2008 as evidence around the underperformance of EU diesel vehicle emission standards in relation to NO_x has emerged.

The UK is split into 43 air quality zones. 30 of the 31 air quality zones in England will require additional time to meet the EU limit values for NO₂. A further 10 air quality zones across Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will also require additional time to meet the NO₂ limit values.

In Northern Ireland, the area in question forms part of one air quality zone plus part of the Greater Belfast agglomeration. The proposed UK air quality plan projects compliance in Northern Ireland by 2015.

The Commission has up to nine months to raise any objections to the air quality plans that are submitted.

Following the Commission's decision on the UK application, the Air Quality Standards (Northern Ireland) Regulations (2010) may be amended to reflect the new compliance deadline.

Responses

Please email your response to: EUAirQuality@defra.gsi.gov.uk and copy to barry.mcauley@doeni.gov.uk

Or post to:

Ekoere Deinne, Atmosphere and Local Environment Programme, Defra, Area 5F, Ergon House, Horseferry Road, London, SW1P 3AL

and copy to:

Barry Mc Auley, Department of the Environment, 6th Floor Goodwood House 44-58 May Street Belfast, BT1 4NN.

Responses must be received by **Friday 5 August 2011**

Consultation criteria

This consultation is in line with the code of practice on consultations. This can be found at <http://www.bis.gov.uk/files/file47158.pdf>

At the end of the consultation period, copies of the responses we receive will be made publicly available in the Defra Information Resource Centre. This is so that the public can see them. Also, 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 will not 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 provisions of Freedom Of Information legislation, we cannot promise that we will always be able to keep those details confidential.

We will summarise all responses and place a summary on our website at http://www.doeni.gov.uk/index/protect_the_environment/local_environmental_issues/air_and_environmental_quality/air_quality_policy.htm and www.defra.gov.uk/consult/2011/06/09/air-quality/ This summary will include a list of names of organisations which have responded, but not individuals' names, addresses or contact details.

To see consultation responses and summaries, please contact the library at:

Defra Information Resource Centre
Lower Ground Floor
Ergon House
17 Smith Square
London
SW1P 3JR

Telephone: 020 7238 6575
E-mail: defra.library@defra.gsi.gov.uk

or contact Barry Mc Auley, Department of the Environment, 6th Floor Goodwood House 44-58 May Street Belfast, BT1 4NN.

Please give 24 hours' notice. There is a charge for photocopying and postage.

If you have any comments or complaints about the consultation process, please address them to Defra's consultation Co-ordinator, Area 7C, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London SW1P 3JR, or e-mail consultation.coordinator@defra.gsi.gov.uk or barry.mcauley@doeni.gov.uk

Yours Faithfully,

Barry McAuley