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REVIEW OF LOCAL AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT

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- **Terms of reference**
- **Structure**
- **Air quality policy context**
- **Analysis & key recommendations**
- **Next steps**

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Terms of reference

In House Policy Consultancy (IHPC) commissioned by the four UK administrations to review LAQM system and make recommendations with a view to:

- Improving air quality outcomes
- Making better use of central and local government resources in relation to LAQM
- Making recommendations for legislative changes where appropriate

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Work programme

- **Project commenced July 2009**
- **IHPC visited a number of LAs across UK (Edinburgh and Perth & Kinross in Scotland) and conducted phone interviews with others**
- **Also interviewed central government officials, consultants and others including SEPA**
- **Workshop held in November 2009**
- **Regular meetings with SG and other UK administrations**

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Framework for review

IHPC produced five discussion papers as a framework for the review:

I – Central/local relations
II – LAQM and planning
III – LAQM and transport
IV – evidence base
V – LAQM process

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Policy context

- LAQM established by Environment Act 1995
- System now fully operational for around 12 years
- Air quality devolved, but UK administrations continue to work closely together:

- common issues

- European obligations

- Requirement to assess air quality against objectives in regulations and declare AQMAs/produce action plans where necessary

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LAQM in 2010

- **Now into fourth round of LAQM**
- **234 LAs across UK (58%) have AQMAs**
- **Vast majority AQMAs (92%) transport related**
- **36 AQMAs revoked to date, but mostly for technical reasons or factors not directly related to air quality**

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Wider trends in air quality

- **Emissions decrease 2000-2006:**

PM10 – 17.4%

NOx – 16.3%

- **But:**

Ambient air quality shows no significant improvement over same period

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- **Relationship between emissions and concentrations is complex**

- **Increase in primary NO_2 from diesel engines a major reason why concentrations haven't declined as expected**

- **PM10 ambient concentrations influenced by atmospheric chemical reactions and emissions not picked up by inventories**

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Wider policy context

- IHPC also reviewed policy context in relation to:

- transport

- planning

- climate change

- health

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Role of LAs without AQMAs

"LAQM monitoring has a part to play in its own right and not simply as a foundation for AQMA designation and action planning. It complements and supports local authorities' other air quality responsibilities…"

(IHPC report)

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LAQM – original intentions vs. current reality

- "Emissions of most major pollutants are expected to decline substantially in coming years, principally as a result of national policies."

(Environment Act White Paper)

- National policies not expected to "impact uniformly in all areas" and LAQM required "where progress in improving air quality may be slow."

(Environment Act White Paper)

- AQMA declarations anticipated for "a handful" of LAs

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"**An urgent need for greater clarity about what measures need to be put in place to deliver air quality objectives and EU limit values, and what part local measures have to play.**"

(IHPC report)

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Two models for the future of LAQM

- **Modest – LAs' role limited to local monitoring and decision making (largely reflects current practice)**

- **Proactive – LAs have a major role to play alongside central government in delivering required air quality improvements (largely reflects original intentions for LAQM)**

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Review and assessment

- **Review and assessment working well – little appetite for radical change**

- **Generates much useful information which could not easily be replicated by other means**

- **Conclusion – reservations about highly prescriptive nature, but reluctance to recommend major restructuring given wide support from LAs**

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Review and assessment – best aspects

- **Technical guidance**

- **Helpdesks**

- **Web based reporting**

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Review and assessment – good aspects

- **Process has been adapted and refined over time in light of experience**
- **Process is largely transparent and straightforward**
- **Annual reporting ensures continuity and helps to keep air quality on the agenda**
- **New problems are still being identified**
- **Central government control provides structure and support**

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Review and assessment – room for improvement?

- **Diminishing returns**
- **Annual reports are disproportionate when air quality varies little from year to year**
- **Air quality only a minor issue for some LAs**
- **Lack of quality control – more central scrutiny of thoroughness and competence of reports?**
- **Better integration of information (not just data) from reports with central government information and policy**

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Streamlining requirements

- **Next technical guidance review should clarify responsibilities for LAs with minor air quality issues**

- **Greater use of inter LA collaboration/regional action**

- **Interval between USAs could be extended to five years and requirements for progress reports reduced**

- **Abolish further assessments should a legislative opportunity arise**

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Better use of local data

- **More could be done with LA data in a UK context, learning from achievements of Scottish website and database, and similar projects in Wales and Northern Ireland**

- **Could help to reduce reliance on modelling and provide more comprehensive overview of air quality**

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Action planning

- **Has not generally met original expectations:**

- **- lack of co-operation/interest from other LA departments, elected members and/or general public**

- **- prohibitive cost of some measures**

- **- doubts about effectiveness of local measures in delivering significant improvements**

- **Central government will need to place tougher obligations on LAs if action planning to be more effective**

- **But – no simple way of achieving this**

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Relationships with other policy areas

- **Central government should develop more effective relationships between air quality and transport policy – set an example for LAs to do similar**

- **Rationalisation of planning guidance must not result in dilution of air quality messages**

- **Important to capitalise on linkages between air quality and climate change – central and local levels**

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Communicating a clearer message

- **LAQM driven by human health considerations**
- **Not enough is made of this link in promoting benefits of better air quality – possible reason for often low profile of AQ?**
- **More effective communications strategies required, backed up by robust statistics**
- **More comparison of air quality with other health threats e.g. road accident deaths**

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Other recommendations

- **LAs require more accessible information on how to assess cost effectiveness of action plan measures**

- **Presentation of statistical data should be more comprehensive and linked more closely to health policy**

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Questionnaire

Undertaken by UWE and AQC to tie in with review

Wide ranging set of questions covering all aspects of LAQM sent to each UK LA

Overall response rate was 55% (69% in Scotland)

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Next steps

- **Review has generated a comprehensive report, an extensive list of recommendations and a detailed questionnaire survey**

- **SG, UK Government departments, other DAs and other interested parties will consider these recommendations over coming months and respond in due course**

- **Report and questionnaire are available on Scottish Air Quality website:**

http://www.scottishairquality.co.uk/reports.php?n_action=report2