

EIR-1838 – Air Pollution - DAERA DoE Report Appraisals

Request:

Please could I ask for a list of issues DAERA has come back to you with, over the last five years of local air quality management reports.

Response:

As DAERA did not come into existence until 08 May 2016, its predecessor was the Department of the Environment, DoE (NI). Within the last 5 years, the following summarises DoE (NI)/DAERA responses in relation to submission of local air quality management reports:

2014

In March 2014, Derry City Council submitted to DoE (NI) a “Dispersion Modelling and Quantitative Appraisal” report. Bureau Veritas was commissioned by Council to undertake compilation of the report. This provided a detailed assessment of NO₂ concentrations at five AQMAs in Derry. DoE (NI) responded in March 2015 and stated that, on the basis of the evidence provided and conclusions given, the report was considered to be acceptable.

The DoE (NI) appraisal stated the following:

“The report includes a monitoring and modelling assessment for the year 2013 and provides details of exceedances of the annual mean objective in all but one AQMA. There are no exceedances of the short-term objective. The report makes the following conclusions and recommendations, and these are supported by the local authority:

- **To amend the AQMA boundaries of Buncrana Road and Spencer Road AQMAs due to a reduction in the areas of exceedance.**
- **To revoke the AQMA at Strand Road as there have been no exceedances monitored in the last three years.**
- **To retain the existing AQMA boundary at Creggan Road.**

The report covers the requirements of a detailed assessment. The following minor comments are made.

- 1. The report could usefully state which AQMA each monitoring site was located in, for example in Tables 6 and 9.**
- 2. The location of monitoring sites could be indicated on the AQMA maps (both existing boundaries and recommended boundaries).**
- 3. It is assumed that the data capture rate given in Table 2 refers to 2013 rather than 2012. Also, the data capture rates for the diffusion tubes for 2013 should be stated in Table 10.”**

Derry City Council acknowledged the above points and referred the comments back to the report compilers, Bureau Veritas.

2015

In April 2015, Council submitted the Derry City Council 2014 Progress Report. Bureau Veritas was commissioned by Council to undertake compilation of the report. DAERA appraised the

report and responded in August 2015 and stated that the report was accepted for monitoring data and new local developments.

The DoE (NI) appraisal stated the following:

“The report concludes that the annual mean objective for nitrogen dioxide continues to be exceeded in the existing AQMAs. There were no exceedances measured outside the AQMAs in 2013.

The local authority should revise their Air Quality Action Plan without delay and proceed towards revocation of the Strand Road AQMA. Their 2015 Updating and Screening Assessment Report is due by the end of April 2015.

The report is well structured and follows the recommended template. The report covers all of the minimum requirements and recommended additional items of the information specified in the Guidance.

The following specific items are drawn to the local authority’s attention to help inform future work. The local authority should note these items for future reporting purposes.

- 1. On page 31, the local authority lists the sites exceeding the annual mean NO₂ objective in 2013. They should state that site C11-13 is within an AQMA as given in Table 2-5.**
- 2. It is noted that the action to revise the action plan is still outstanding from 2012. This should be completed without delay.**
- 3. Section 9 refers to a remodelling report which is to be submitted to Defra imminently. It is assumed that this action refers to the Detailed Assessment which was submitted in March 2015 to DoENI?”**

Council liaised with Bureau Veritas to amend the report, taking account of point 1. Council stated that work was ongoing in relation to point 2. In relation to point 3, we replied in the affirmative.

2017

In June 2017, Council submitted, in one report, the “2015 Updating and Screening Assessment, 2016 Progress Report and 2017 Progress Report” for Derry City and Strabane District Council. In normal circumstances, a separate report would have been submitted each year however, due to amalgamation of Councils in the Review of Public Administration and staff allocation issues for specific functions, it was agreed that one report could be submitted to cover the three years in question.

DAERA appraised the report and responded in August 2017 and found the report was considered acceptable for monitoring data and new local developments, but not acceptable in relation to the failure to submit updates to Action Plans.

The following points were raised:

1. "The local authority has measured exceedances of the annual mean NO₂ objective at locations within Creggan Road, Dale's Corner and Buncrana AQMA's, over the last 3 years with no exceedances in Buncrana AQMA in 2016. We agree with the conclusion that these AQMA's should remain for the time being, until measurements are consistently below objective levels.
2. There are no recent recorded exceedances within the Spencer Road or Strand Road AQMA's, but site SP1-2 remains close to the objective. We concur with the conclusions in the report, that Spencer Road AQMA should remain, and the Council could consider reviewing monitoring sites to represent relevant exposure. We agree that the Strand AQMA should be considered for revocation.
3. The nitrogen dioxide monitoring results suggest that it is likely that the objective are likely to be met in most locations in the remaining AQMA's in the next few years. It may be appropriate to consider reviewing the current monitoring programme in order to continue to focus on pollution hotspots, and inform the development of further action plan measures in these locations.
4. There is no specific discussion with regard to monitoring or compliance with the objectives for particulate matter for Strabane, Castle Derg, or Newtownstewart AQMA's, declared for previous use of solid fuels for domestic heating. The one representative monitoring site at Springhill Park shows results significantly below objective levels. On the basis that there is no evidence to the contrary, it is also recommended that all these three AQMA's should be considered for revocation.
5. The AQMA records as recorded on the Defra website do not appear up to date. It would assist central record keeping if the status of current AQMA's could be updated via the RSW website.

In addition, the AQMA records as recorded on the Defra website do not appear up to date. It would assist central record keeping if the status of current AQMA's could be updated via the RSW website.

In relation to the "not acceptable" element of the appraisal, Derry City and Strabane District council is reminded to submit an Action Plan to cover the period of time from 2015-2017. This Action Plan is currently outstanding and is due immediately. The Department will be withholding payment of the 2016-17 grant claim, in accordance with Annex 1 of the conditions of offer, received by Derry City and Strabane District council on the 19 August 2018, until the aforementioned Action Plan received."

Derry City and Strabane District Council responded as follows:

Point 1. Accepted

Point 2. The Council confirms that the monitoring sites in the Spencer Road AQMA have been amended to represent relevant exposure. This AQMA shall be reduced in size to reflect that suggested in the 2014 Derry City Council Dispersion Modelling and

Quantitative Appraisal. An Order shall be passed revoking the Strand Road AQMA and detailing the extent of the reduced AQMA at Spencer Road.

Point 3. Accepted. The Council concurs that nitrogen dioxide monitoring results suggest that it is likely that the objective is likely to be met in most locations in the remaining AQMA's in the next few years. Additional evidence in monitoring trends in this regard at particular locations within the AQMA's shall be forwarded to the Air & Environmental Quality Unit in the draft Air Quality Action Plan Update that Council is currently finalising.

Point 4. The 2015 UPDATING AND SCREENING ASSESSMENT, 2016 PROGRESS REPORT AND 2017 PROGRESS REPORT, In Section 2.2.2, states that PM₁₀ concentrations were below both the annual mean and 24-hour mean objectives at both the Rosemount and Springhill sites in all years (2015, 2016 and 2017). The Council would concur, on the basis that the monitoring site at Springhill Park shows results significantly below pollutant objective levels that the AQMA's at Strabane, Castle Derg and Newtownstewart should be revoked. This shall be enacted by inclusion in the Order mentioned in point 2 above.

Point 5. Accepted. The status of current AQMA's shall be updated via the RSW website

Failure to submit Action Plans

The Council is currently finalising its Action Plan Progress Report and this shall be forwarded shortly. In addition, as previously mentioned, the Council is finalising a draft Action Plan Update. The draft shall also be forwarded to the Air & Environmental Quality Unit as part of the consultation process.

Derry City and Strabane District Council subsequently submitted the Action Plan Progress Report 2015 – 2017 to DAERA in September 2017. DAERA appraised the report and responded in November 2017 and found the report was considered acceptable for updates to Action Plans.

The following points were raised:

“The Action Plan Progress Report covers the requirements for reporting on action plan progress.

Following the completion of this report, Derry City and Strabane District Council should submit the draft Action Plan for public consultation on completion, and the next USA Report, by the 30th June 2018.

1. Derry City and Strabane District Council have provided an update on the status of current AQMAs and an update on the status of measures within the current Action Plan from 2012 that was developed to address AQMAs 1-3 in Derry.

2. The review of the current AQMAs makes clear that:

**AQMA 4 Derry: Strand Road, and
Strabane AQMAs (6-8) are due to be revoked.**

Furthermore Derry AQMA 5 Spencer Road is due to be reduced in area.

3. All of the proposed changes to these AQMAs should proceed and when the changes have been formally adopted by the Council, notification of the changes should be made via the Defra RSW website.

4. It is then clear that the remaining AQMAs are those in Derry, (AQMA 1,2,3 &5).

5. The last Action Plan for Derry was issued in 2012 and addressed AQMAs 1-3.

6. The proposed new Action Plan will also be required to address AQMA 5 Spencer Road, Derry.

7. The latest progress report highlights the current expected dates of achieving the AQ objectives, based upon trends from recent monitoring within each AQMA.

8. These results suggest that the AQ objectives are likely to be met as follows:

AQMA 1 Creggan Road – Mid 2019 (2 exceedance points in 2016, 3 in 2015, 4 in 2014)

AQMA2 Dales Corner – Mid-late 2020's (4 exceedance points in 2016, 3 in 2015, 3 in 2014)

AQMA3 Buncrana Road – 2017/18 (1 exceedance points in 2016, 2015 and 2014)

AQMA 5 Spencer Road - (1 exceedance point in 2016 and 2015)

There were no forecasted predictions for AQMA 5 Spencer Road.

9. The previous AQAP in 2012 involved detailed work on source apportionment, and some modelling for scenario options for consideration within the current AQAP.

10. Without further detailed modelling to re-evaluate the potential effectiveness of further action plan measures, the reliance upon predictions based solely of local diffusion tube results are likely to be unreliable, as shown by the variability in monitoring from one year to the next.

11. Thus we suggest that further recourse is made to localised modelling for the remaining AQMAs, considering the current and future predicted traffic mix and flows, with particular regard to considering periods when traffic may be congested and including measures to address queuing and congestion management. The latest Defra Guidance LAQM TG(16) includes significant detail within Chapter 2 on developing effective measures for Action Planning.

12. The AQMA records as recorded on the Defra website do not appear up to date. It would assist central record keeping if the status of current AQMA's could be updated via the RSW website."

The points made above have been taken on board by Council. Records were updated taking account the content of Point 12.

It should be noted that DAERA arrange for all local authority LAQM reports submitted to them to be uploaded to the Northern Ireland air quality website. If any LAQM reports that have been through the DAERA appraisal process have not yet been uploaded to the public portal, they can be supplied electronically upon request.

Under the heading 'point 4', within bullet point two, on the topic of air quality challenges, you state that one issue is: "Reduced financial resources to put in place real measures that will improve air quality more quickly, again this is dependent on central government and

block grant to NI Assembly.” Please could I ask what “block grant” means, in this sentence?

The block grant is given to the executive annually and is allocated after the Treasury works out how much Northern Ireland should get from the UK's overall income. The sum is worked out using the Barnett formula, and it is also used to determine budget allocations to Scotland and Wales. The block grant is allocated to the various departments in Northern Ireland and some of this money may be earmarked for environment and air quality. In England, the government has allocated sizeable sums to helping improve air quality. In Northern Ireland, it would help if this was replicated to help improve air quality here. (This is the opinion of the author) Currently, local authorities in Northern Ireland are made grant offers from DAERA after application for financial assistance for air quality initiatives/ monitoring from the Environment Fund which derives income from the plastic bag levy.