

Joint Inquiry on Air Quality

Submission by Winchester Action on Climate Change (WinACC)

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How effectively do Government policies take into account the health and environmental impacts of poor air quality?

Government policies concentrate on reducing NO₂, and this is important, but the main threat to health is PM pollution, and the real threat to the planet is CO₂ pollution. The current government policies need to broaden their focus to include both of these. They should match or better all EU targets on pollution.

The scale of the measures is far too modest and the timetable is far too slow. The consultation paper set out the seriousness and urgency of the problem very clearly but the policies that were adopted failed to match the analysis with a robust and sufficiently developed framework for action.

40,000 deaths per year from pollution - a level of casualty second only to deaths related to smoking - is a public health emergency, The courts have already told the government that its proposals are too little too late. Government policies are an inadequate response . It is crucial to develop a far more ambitious set of firm proposals. The government's reluctance to put diesel car owners at a disadvantage is misplaced.

Do these plans set out effective and proportionate measures to achieve necessary emissions reductions as quickly as possible?

The identification of local authorities affected is inadequate. The list of five authorities focussed on in December 2015 left out many important areas of pollution, and Table 1 (p14 of the recent government consultation document) still left out important areas. In our county, Hampshire, both Winchester and Eastleigh rightly have AQMAs and neither are included. On the other hand Rushmore has no AQMA and is included. The list does not accurately reflect where there are problems. The modelling the proposals rely on is inadequate. Winchester city centre has at least four roads forecast persistently to exceed NO₂ legal limits and should be included.

Too little has been proposed by the government to tackle linear pollution on motorways, and the consequent problems for motorway users and neighbouring communities are not adequately addressed. It is not sufficient to give Highways England lead responsibility on this. The M3 bypass on the edge of Winchester is one of the most polluting roads in the South East according to the maps included in the last government consultation. The M3 has a major detrimental impact on the air quality of eastern Winchester (Winnall), and a structure for joint responsibility should reflect this. Users of motorways such as M3 are

exposed to the highest levels of pollution, especially as it cuts through Twyford Down and no schemes or programmes are tackling this type of problem. New and clearer maps that combine both motorways and local authorities need to be published, so that places can be identified where joint responsibility between local authorities and Highways England is required.

Are other nations or cities taking more effective action that the UK can learn from?

Significant schemes for traffic reduction have been implemented in many places, both large and small, in the UK and elsewhere. The EU Evidence Project has reviewed a very large number of these and published full information at <http://evidence-project.eu/>. The government should review their work and publish a plan for applying their findings to tackling pollution here.

Is there enough cross-government collaboration to set in place the right fiscal and policy incentives?

The joint inquiry is a welcome development. To reflect this level of co-operation, Defra, DfT, and the Department of Health should start working more closely together, pool their resources and coordinate their strategies, both nationally and locally.

How can those charged with delivering national plans at local level be best supported and challenged?

There needs to be far more support for local authorities. No attempt has yet been made to quantify what action will be necessary at a local level, and its cost. A map that shows real (as opposed to estimated) pollution needs to be created to supersede the current estimates. Resources need to be made available for measuring equipment to deliver the real-world map that will integrate at a local level information on pollution, the responsibility for which is currently split between local authorities and Highways England.

The responsibilities of the Highways England and local authorities should be integrated at a local level, and comprehensive plans agreed to cover the whole country. In Winchester, as we said above, there are illegal levels of pollution in both the city centre, and along the M3 by-pass. There are probably overlaps in the causes of both types of pollution: diesel vehicles accessing and leaving Winchester. Only close co-operation between three public bodies will have the range of strategic vision to resolve both pollution problems: the district council responsible for resolving local pollution, the county council, responsible for local highways, and Highways England, responsible for the motorway.

The government should develop the framework within which these three public bodies should work together effectively, to enable them to agree on the dimensions of the problem, develop a strategy, and carry out an action plan. The framework must be set out clearly now to prevent further delays and unnecessary deaths. Once resource requirements

have been identified, a budget needs to be identified and clear targets set for pollution reduction. Targets should be set for every local authority where pollution has been identified.

Extensive guidance should be produced to promote positive ideas and encourage local government to take steps to reduce pollution. Removing vehicles from key streets altogether will have the most rapid impact. The government is wrong to rule this out .

Winchester City Council and Hampshire County Council are currently exploring ways of reducing traffic in Winchester city centre. Funding could usefully be provided for:

- Reconfiguration of the road network to discourage cars from entering the central area
- Creation of supply road loops to enable access for businesses and residents, but not to serve through traffic
- The creation of a coherent cycle network
- The improvement of pedestrian facilities
- Better public transport
- Electrification of the bus fleet
- Additional parking on the edge of the town centre.

Winchester is a small intensively used traffic system with concentrated high levels of pollution. Investment in places like this would provide very good value for money.