
SCRUTINY INQUIRY PANEL - AIR QUALITY
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18 DECEMBER 2014

Present: Councillors Hammond (Chair), Coombs, Galton, McEwing (Vice-Chair), O'Neill and Parnell

Apologies: Councillors Lloyd

17. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (INCLUDING MATTERS ARISING)**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 20th November be approved and signed as a correct record.

18. **REVIEW OF EVIDENCE**

The Panel considered the report of the Assistant Chief Executive giving an overview of the evidence received at previous meetings of the Inquiry.

Dr Beth Conlan, Business Manager at Ricardo-AEA, was in attendance and gave a presentation on the results of the feasibility study that was carried out in relation to a low emission zone (LEZ) on the Western Approach.

Dr Conlan explained that the study had been commissioned by the City Council, as there had been a failure to meeting the air quality targets. Ricardo-AEA had undertaken many similar studies for other local authorities as failure to meet the targets was not just isolated to Southampton.

The source of the emissions was looked at. Road transport was part of this, which was expected, however in Southampton another major factor was the port activities in this area. Any solution to the problems would have to include both sources for emissions in order to produce a result.

Charts presented showed the breakdown of the emissions in the areas in and around the Western Approach. And indicating where the levels were too high.

The study identified that the cost of introducing a LEZ would outweigh the benefits. The natural changes/renewal of vehicles to models which comply with emission standards would achieve the results without the cost implications to the Authority. Therefore the study concluded that a Low Emissions Strategy (LES) should be introduced rather than a LEZ.

Dr Conlan reported that some authorities were thinking about progressing with LEZ, however, these were authorities that had established low emission strategies and were therefore further along the route.

Mr Steve Guppy, Southampton City Council, Scientific Services, stated that they would continue to pursue a LES and that a grant had been received from DEFRA to allow work to start.

The following points/responses were given:

- Comparisons to other cities with major ports had not been looked at. Work had been undertaken at Liverpool, but not recently enough to be able to make use of it.
- Concerns were raised that the evidence data was gathered at a time during the recession when the port was not operating at the capacity that it was now.
- Evidence suggested that the new Euro VI engine was considerably better than Euro V.
- It was reiterated that pollution levels in Southampton were considerably better than faced by many other cities.
- If a LEZ was introduced it would most likely be monitored through cameras and number plate recognition. If vehicles were compliant then fines would be issued. In London the fine was currently £200 per day. In Germany there was a national standard, with vehicles displaying a sticker to confirm they comply. This was then enforced by traffic wardens.
- Revenue from fines was factored into the study, together with the implementation costs and possible savings to public health. An aim would be to make the scheme cost neutral. If successful with lowering pollution then there would be a cost to enforce the scheme as fewer vehicles would be non-compliant.
- Options of voluntary arrangements could be considered. Currently only bus operators, through the bus partnership, were involved in this, were they agree to operate “clean” buses on certain routes.
- Many of the large haulage companies already comply with current Euro V standard and as they renewed their fleets they would introduce Euro VI.
- Concerns about emissions and safety for cyclist along the Western Approach were raised. Congestion was still caused by the compliant vehicles. Part of the strategy could be to encourage a modal shift in the types of journeys/ transport being used.
- The emissions issues were not just generated by the freight vehicles but also motor cars, particularly in congested areas.
- It was confirmed that although several years ago there had been a push for diesel vehicles to reduce the emission of CO₂, these were worse for NO_x emissions.
- It was agreed that generally people were unaware of the impact emissions had on their health.
- Speed limits reductions would have little impact on emissions levels. The issue of vehicles stop/ starting was a greater impact, therefore the importance should be on reducing congestion.
- It was questioned how the number of bus movements was higher than HGVs on the information provided. It was explained that the data did not only count the movements it also used a formula that included calculating the age of the vehicle and the likely emissions generated from it.
- There was currently no definite policy from Government that encouraged the use of either petrol or diesel cars. It was suggested that if your annual mileage was less than 11K, and included shorter journeys then petrol was probably the best option. Diesel engines performed better on the longer journeys.
- A LES would be formulated and introduced after discussing fully with all stakeholders. Meetings would start in January. It was hoped that a draft strategy would be ready by mid-Spring.

- It was agreed that there was a need to increase peoples' knowledge on ways to improve air quality' and improving green infrastructure is another way to help improve air quality.
- It was noted that Bradford was leading the way with regards to “plug-in-places” for electric vehicles and had included it in their planning guidance. Many grants were available for such schemes. Southampton as and authority was now applying for such grants. Funding facilities in private developments was the responsibility of the developer.
- It was noted that improvements at the Redbridge roundabout to improve the flow of HGVs into the Docks had been included as one of the schemes recently announce by the Government.
- It was reported that work with the Port was already in progress. And this included the introduction of a hybrid straddle carrier.
- It was questioned whether there had been any research into how the introduction of a LES or LEZ impacted on the local economy.
- It was important to tackle the key sources of emissions – buses, HGVs, congestion and the Port. Policies need to be in place for each of these areas.
- A suggestion was made that greater usage of LPG should be looked at. This would resolve the problem of needing charging points for electric vehicles.

It was agreed that the introduction of a Strategy rather than a LEZ was a more practical way forward.

19. **WOODLAND TRUST - URBAN AIR QUALITY REPORT**

The Panel noted the report of the Assistant Chief Executive giving details of the report produced by the Woodland Trust in 2012 on urban air quality.