

Air Quality Inquiry - Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

1. After consideration of the evidence presented to them the Panel have reached the following conclusions:
 - Air quality is a significant issue in Southampton that has a detrimental impact on health and wellbeing and the environment.
 - A lot of good practice and innovative approaches have been employed in Southampton to address air pollution.
 - Despite technological advances and good practice it is likely that with increased traffic levels, population growth and economic development, including increased activity within the Port, air quality will remain a significant problem in Southampton with associated health and environmental impacts unless more is done to tackle the issue.
 - Southampton can and must do more, taking advantage of the opportunities available, to improve air quality in the city.

Recommendations

2. The Panel have identified a number of recommendations that they believe will, if fully implemented, help reduce harmful air pollution in Southampton and limit the impact on vulnerable members of society. The recommendations have been categorised under the following headings:
 - Building on success – Ambition and vision
 - Leading by example
 - Traffic
 - Partnership working
 - Communication

Building on success – Ambition and vision

3. This report outlines a few of the numerous measures that have been employed or are planned to reduce emissions in Southampton. The city needs to build on the successes, deliver the proposed improvements and collectively be more ambitious, seeking funding opportunities where available to achieve the vision of a low emissions city. In support of this the following recommendations are proposed:
 - In recognition that road vehicles are the primary source of NO₂ emissions and particulate matter in the city the Panel recognised the importance of encouraging behaviour change towards healthier and more environmentally friendly alternatives. The Panel therefore recommend that:
 - (i) ***The Council continues to fully support modal shift initiatives through the My Journey campaign and related initiatives encouraging people to use alternative modes of transport.***

- The Panel reviewed the evidence related to interventions which might be effective in achieving the limit value for NO₂. The Panel agreed that the Low Emission Zone was at this stage not the preferred option and recommend that:
 - (ii) ***The Council, learning from best practice, develops a Low Emissions Strategy that articulates the vision for a low emissions city and provides strategic focus to the promotion of low emission technologies and improving air quality across Southampton. This should be overseen by the Health and Wellbeing Board.***
- Funding opportunities are available to areas that have a track record in delivering agreed outcomes and have ambition and vision that supports lowering emissions. Southampton has been successful in securing external funding and, supported by a developing Low Emissions Strategy, should continue to seek grant funding, matched by council resources if required. Therefore, following the canvassing of support from key partners during the inquiry, the Panel recommend that:
 - (iii) ***The Council is to continue to seek funding opportunities and submit bids reflecting commitment to a step change in adopting ultra-low emission vehicles, alternative fuels and technologies that will be delivered alongside sustainable transport choices.***
- Evidence to the Panel suggested that the cheapest yet most effective measures for combatting pollutants in the air was by green infrastructure. Southampton should consider a tree planting project similar to what is being undertaken in [Bristol](#), where every primary school child (36,000) has the chance to plant a tree in their city.

Funding could be explored, and would help alleviate air pollution levels but also give the city a great legacy. Our youngest citizens would learn about the importance of wildlife but also have a physical link to a personal piece of Southampton.

A less ambitious (and cheaper) option would be to start a tree planting project around Air Quality Management Areas and schools located near these. The Council could source European funding or other funding opportunities.

 - (iv) ***The City Council adopts an ambitious green infrastructure planting programme, which is tied in with primary schools to teach children the importance of their environment.***
 - (v) ***The Councils Tree Team are to prioritise the re-planting/ planting of trees and other green infrastructure which are known for their pollutant absorbing capabilities.***

Leading by example

4. Local authorities have an important role to play in helping to improve air quality. The Panel recognise the strong working relationships between different council services but consider that opportunities exist for the council to lead by example and ensure that reducing emissions is at the forefront of council decision making. It is therefore recommended that:

(vi) *The Council ensures that the aims and objectives within the developing Low Emissions Strategy permeates into the decision making processes so that all relevant plans, policies and strategies give due consideration to air quality.*

- Planning Policy can help to improve air quality by reducing emissions through guiding patterns of development to locations served by public transport, and by mitigating emissions through 'on site' measures such as building layout, ventilation and types of building material; and 'off site' measures such as landscaping and green infrastructure. The Panel were informed of the approach followed by Bradford MDC where planning policy is a key component of their Low Emission Strategy and of examples of 'green landscaping' that can help improve air quality with little expenditure. To ensure that planning policy supports and drives reducing emissions in Southampton it is recommended that:

(vii) *The Council use the review of the Local Plan and the development of the Low Emissions Strategy to evaluate how planning policy can be more effective at reducing and mitigating emissions. To include working with Council's Tree Team, the Woodland Trust and others to identify preferred species of trees to absorb pollution, and with developers and partners to prioritise green infrastructure especially near pollution hotspots and green routes.*

- The Council's Fleet Management Service sources vehicles for business units across the Council and spends more than £1m annually on fuel. To reduce fuel consumption and emissions the Panel recommends that:

(viii) *The Council follows the lead set by the bus companies and implements the driver monitoring equipment fitted to any light goods and refuse vehicles and recognises drivers who drive efficiently. This is to happen as soon as possible.*

(ix) *Eco-Driver training is made mandatory for all employees who drive Council vehicles and existing staff members are to be trained as soon as possible.*

(x) *The impact on air quality is factored into the procurement decisions made by Fleet Management Services and the council looks at sourcing ultra-low emission Electric/ Hybrid Vehicles and retrofitting existing petrol and especially diesel vehicles with low-*

emission technologies. The default position being an ultra-low emission vehicle unless a business case shows otherwise.

- As the report highlights electric vehicle provision is pretty woeful in the council, both in the respect of internal adoption (fleet operations) and encouraging our residents to consider this option as opposed to polluting diesels and petrol. The public health benefits of Electric car ownership benefit everybody in the city with zero exhaust emissions from the car. The Council should recognise the current high cost of Electric Vehicles and help adoption by granting 2 hour free on street car parking throughout the city. This could easily be adopted by issuing a special coloured parking disk which would have to be displayed:

(xi) To help encourage the adoption of zero emission vehicles in the city the Council should offer free 2 hour on-street parking to vehicles which emit zero emissions i.e. electric vehicles.

Traffic

5. As a general rule vehicles in free flowing traffic emit less pollution than those in stop-start traffic jams. To improve the flow of traffic in the city the Panel recommend that the Council:

(xii) Ensure that air quality is given due consideration during the current review of the ITS Strategy, (delivered by the Integrated Transport Board). As well as optimising traffic movements, traffic light signal plans, speed limits (including 20mph in areas where stop-start traffic is a problem) and other traffic management applications should be used to deliver improvements in air quality wherever possible.

(xiii) Re-evaluates the potential for Park and Ride sites for the city, factoring the public health costs of air pollution into the decision making process. To investigate with partners the ability to develop future sites through the Local Plan process identifying potential capital funding sources as well as commercially viable operation through partnerships with transport operators.

(xiv) Prioritise the re-surfacing of cycle routes across the city, starting with main commuting routes, making cycling safer and more appealing through the revision of the Transport Assets Management Plan (TAMP) including seeking external funding to increase the scale and viability of such a programme. Consulting with cycling groups on new and existing routes.

(xv) Seek to influence the idling policies of key transport operators within the city, including port activity, trains, buses, taxis and HGVs, to minimise emissions caused by engines idling.

Partnership Working

6. It is clear the city has benefited from additional funding as a result of good partnership working taking place across the city between the Council and other key stakeholders including ABP, DWP and bus companies. Evidence presented to the Panel highlighted the need to focus on port activities to reduce emissions from actions such as ship hotelling, identified as a major polluter in the Ricardo-AEA Western Docks study. The Panel were informed that ports in Germany and California use shore power technology to power ships when in port, thereby removing the emissions caused by ship generators. The Panel recommend that:

(xvi) The Council work in partnership with key stakeholders to assess the feasibility and eventual introduction of shore power technology at the Port of Southampton.

(xvii) The Council is to, with support from other Port cities, write to the MPs of the City and the DfT to encourage the adoption of shore power across the UK.

- Use of the Sustainable Distribution Centre can reduce the number HGVs coming into the city, relieve congestion and lower emissions. It is recommended that:

(xviii) The Council encourages partners to make greater use of the Sustainable Distribution Centre.

Communications

7. The results of the Air Quality survey demonstrated that people are interested in receiving information on air quality in the city. The Air Alert service enables people who are more vulnerable to air pollution to receive alerts when pollution levels are high in Southampton. Currently there are 201 subscribers to this free service and 75% of subscribers felt that the service improves their wellbeing. However, funding from DEFRA for this service is due to cease in 2016. The Panel recommend that:

(xix) The Council explore opportunities to integrate the Air Alert service with other information/messaging and health alert services, such as cold and heat alerts, and consider how user friendly air quality information can be communicated to a wider audience through existing channels such as Stay Connected.

(xx) The Council looks at innovative ways to measure air quality across the city.

8. Finally, Members of the Panel recognise that whilst the Council has an important role to play in improving quality in the city, it is clear this cannot be done in isolation. A change of mind-set for all is needed.