

# News story: Government to fund local authority plans to tackle air pollution

Further action to tackle air pollution in the UK has been set out today as the government publishes a supplement to its plan to improve air quality.

Ten local authorities will now take forward new measures, developed with and funded by central government, to reduce pollution levels.

Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

While air quality has improved significantly in recent years, we know urgent action is still required to tackle roadside air pollution in our towns and cities.

This is why through our £3.5 billion national air quality plan, we are working with local authorities across the UK and I am pleased ten local authorities will now implement new measures to drive down pollution.

The Roads Minister Jesse Norman and I have written to the leaders of all the authorities that have submitted feasibility studies to thank them for their hard work and underline that Defra will continue to support them to improve air quality in their areas.

While Nitrogen Dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) levels have fallen significantly in recent decades, including a 27% drop since 2010, the UK Plan for Tackling Roadside Nitrogen Dioxide Concentrations outlines how councils with the worst levels of air pollution at busy road junctions and hotspots must take robust action.

Earlier this year, Ministerial Directions were issued to 33 local authorities, requiring them to submit studies on the steps they can take to comply with roadside NO<sub>2</sub> limits in the shortest amount of time. Today, the government published a supplement to this plan setting out work carried out with those 33 local authorities and the further action which will now be taken:

- Ten local authorities (Dudley, Leicester, Newcastle-under Lyme, Portsmouth, Reading, Wolverhampton, Sandwell, Solihull, Basingstoke and Deane, and South Gloucestershire) will take forward new measures to tackle air pollution.

The measures include:

1. The retrofitting of approximately 400 buses with technology to reduce

emissions;

2. Traffic management measures such as adjustments to signalling to reduce congestion;
  3. Behavioural change campaigns to encourage individuals to take action and reduce their contribution to air pollution.
- Eight local authorities will now carry out a more detailed study outlining in detail how they will tackle the more persistent air quality problems they have identified. This will be presented to government by [31 October 2019]. These are Bolsover, Bradford, Portsmouth, Broxbourne, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Stoke-on-Trent, Leicester and Liverpool. Portsmouth, Leicester and Newcastle-under-Lyme are being directed to carry out more detailed studies, but have also identified measures that can bring forward compliance quicker.
  - Eighteen local authorities are already operating within legal limits or have not found any measures to bring compliance sooner. These will be expected to maintain their work to reduce pollution levels and improve the quality of the air.

The government will ensure sufficient funding is in place to support all the activities set out in this supplement to the national plan.

Also announced today is the Air Quality Grant for 2018-19 which will provide support to local authorities across England to deliver projects to improve air quality. Applicants in previous years have been awarded funding to install electric vehicle charging points, improve cycling infrastructure and develop local online air quality resources.

This year's total of £3million is the largest air quality grant to date.

The full Supplement to the [N02 Plan](#) is available online.

As part of the UK Plan for Tackling Roadside Nitrogen Dioxide Concentrations nearly £500m extra funding was made available to support local authorities to tackle their N02 exceedances. Due to the highly localised nature of the problem, local knowledge is crucial in solving pollution problems in these hotspots and it is accordingly right that local authorities should take the lead, with support from the government.

The government has been working with Birmingham, Leeds, Nottingham, Southampton and Derby since December 2015 and required them to produce full business cases by 15 September 2018.

Final plans from Birmingham, Leeds and Nottingham were received. The government needs to assess these detailed submissions but are pleased with

the progress this demonstrates.

Southampton and Derby did not finalise the plans by this deadline, instead submitting progress updates. The government has issued letters setting out concerns, urging them to ensure this does not delay delivering better air quality, as delays will have serious associated consequences up to and including legal action.

In July 2017 the government required 23 additional local authorities to draw up final plans at the latest by 31 December 2018 and is supporting them to achieve this.

The full list of successful [Air Quality Grant](#) projects from 2017/2018 can be found online.

On 22 May the government launched a new world leading [Clean Air Strategy](#) for consultation which aims to halve the harm to human health from air pollution in the UK by 2030.

On 9 July the government launched the new [Road to Zero Strategy](#) setting out the Government's ambition for the UK to be the best place in the world and the ambitious aim for at least half of new car sales to be ultra-low emission by 2030.

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## [Press release: Natascha Engel appointed as Commissioner for Shale Gas](#)

Former MP Natascha Engel was today (5 October 2018) announced as the new independent Commissioner for Shale Gas.

The government understands the development of shale gas exploration and production sites is an issue which directly affects local communities and recognises the need to provide those communities with impartial, fact-based information.

Taking up her post this week, Natascha Engel will be a direct communication link between local communities, the shale gas industry and the industry regulators. The commissioner will be a contact point for residents, to listen to their concerns, refer them to relevant and factual research and help improve communication with regulators and industry.

Natascha Engel, Commissioner for Shale Gas, said:

If extracted safely, shale gas has the potential to be a new,

domestic source of energy for the UK. But there is a need for clear, impartial information to be provided to all parties and in particular those local communities most affected by shale gas development.

As the Commissioner for Shale Gas, I look forward to working closely with communities, regulators and industry to ensure facts are easily accessible as the process of shale exploration continues to develop.

Energy and Clean Growth Minister Claire Perry said

It's important we get the facts straight on shale gas and that communities can access the best scientific information when engaging with the developers and regulators.

This new role will provide a single point of contact for local residents to get the information they need and have their questions answered.

As the UK makes progress towards shale gas production, proving a streamlined way for developers to engage with our robust regulators will increase efficiency and help to continually improve our already world-leading regulations in this area.

The UK regulatory regime for shale gas is considered among the most robust and stringent in the world.

Regulators ensure the shale gas industry meets the relevant environmental criteria to operate responsibly in the UK and that these regulations keep pace with the development of shale gas exploration.

The commissioner will work closely with the shale gas regulators, although will be distinct from them, as it is not a regulatory role and has no powers of enforcement or investigation. To preserve the independence of the regulators, the commissioner will not comment on any specific regulatory decisions.

The appointment comes as the government announced the set up of a Shale Environmental Regulator Group, which will bring the regulators (Oil and Gas Authority, Health and Safety Executive and Environment Agency) together as a virtual body. The Shale Environmental Regulator Group will act as one, coherent, single face for local authorities and industry, helping to resolve regulatory issues on sites and sharing best practice with local authorities considering shale gas applications.

## **Natascha Engel**

Natascha Engel was Member of Parliament for North East Derbyshire from 2005 to 2017.

She has first-hand experience of the local impact of shale gas developments and also has experience of working closely with industry, regulators and government on how to best engage local communities on this important topic.

An email address for the Shale Commissioner will be made available shortly.

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## [News story: Members of LLWR workforce collect prestigious health and safety accolade](#)

Members of the LLWR workforce were on hand to collect the organisation's fourth President's Award for its exceptional performance in 2017, in a RoSPA ceremony in Glasgow.

Accolades are based on an organisation's individual occupational health and safety performance and the President's Award was conferred in recognition of LLWR receiving a 13th consecutive Gold Award.

Elaine Burrage, LLWR's Health & Safety (H&S) Manager, said: "In order to achieve a Gold Award we have to declare our safety statistics to RoSPA, but that is only part of the judging criteria.

"RoSPA also want to understand and assess our H&S management system, how we are continuously improving the health and safety of all those involved in our activities, ensuring that we provide adequate training to the correct standards, ensuring that our contractors and others affected by our work are kept safe at all times and how we monitor our performance and the health of our workforce.

"These are only a few of the criteria they assess us on."

Russell Beckwith, Low Level Waste Operations Manager, one of those chosen to attend the ceremony, said: "Being asked to represent LLWR and accepting the President's Award for 13 years of outstanding performance was a proud moment.

"For us to be associated with companies that seek to achieve excellence in health and safety performance and keep that standard going for this considerable length of time just goes to prove the high standards we set ourselves, not just ensuring that we all go home safely to our families, but also that what we are doing is being recognised on the national stage."

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## [Policy paper: Air quality plan for nitrogen dioxide \(NO2\) in UK \(2017\): air quality directions](#)

The directions require specified local authorities to carry out studies or to implement actions to meet legal limits for nitrogen dioxide in the shortest possible time, and sets deadlines.

These are supporting documents of the [Air quality plan for nitrogen dioxide \(NO2\) in UK \(2017\)](#).

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## [News story: Consultation on Inshore Vessel Monitoring Systems \(I-VMS\) for fishing boats under 12m](#)

The Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) are [seeking views](#) on proposals to introduce Inshore Vessel Monitoring Systems (I-VMS) for all licensed British fishing boats under 12 metres in length, operating in English waters. This also covers English boats operating outside of English waters.

VMS has been used as a monitoring system for UK vessels of 12 metres and over since 2013. The system records the location, speed and heading of a vessel using GPRS technology. Introducing I-VMS for under 12 metre vessels will provide a more accurate picture on fishing location and activity, which will help inform future fisheries management and sustainability.

The data could also allow fishermen to market their produce as sustainably caught, providing consumers with greater awareness of where their fish has come from and helping them to make more informed decisions.

Fisheries Minister George Eustice said:

“Monitoring systems play a crucial role in developing a framework for fisheries management that is both profitable and sustainable – and that allows all sections of our fleet to thrive.

“I now encourage everyone with an interest to have their say by [responding to the consultation](#).”

It is proposed that the initial cost and installation of the equipment will

be met by the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund in order to minimise cost to industry.

The six week consultation will close on 14 November 2018.

Interested parties are invited to share their views either [online](#) or by post to:

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