

AIR QUALITY INFORMATION SYSTEM REVIEW STEERING GROUP

MEETING TWO: MINUTES

Friday 4TH March 2022
10:00-12:30

VIRTUAL MEETING via Microsoft Teams

ATTENDANCE		
<u>Chair:</u>	Bill Parish	<i>Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)</i>
<u>Members:</u>	Ally Lewis	<i>Air Quality Expert Group (AQEG)</i>
	Rob Day	<i>Asthma + Lung UK</i>
	Anna Hansell	<i>Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants (COMEAP)</i>
	John Newington	<i>Defra</i>
	Matthew Clarke	<i>Hertfordshire County Council</i>
	Andrew Grieve	<i>Imperial College London</i>
	Gillian Mawdsley	<i>Lay Representative</i>
	Jo Feary	<i>Respiratory Consultant</i>
	Karen Exley	<i>UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA)</i>
	Kirsty Smallbone	<i>University of Brighton</i>
<u>Guest Attendance</u>	Minister Jo Churchill	<i>Defra</i>
<u>Secretariat:</u>	Shaun Brace	<i>Defra</i>
	Sarah Haley	<i>Defra</i>
	Stuart Aldridge	<i>UKHSA</i>
	Eleanor Sykes	<i>UKHSA</i>
	Lisa Zhang	<i>UKHSA</i>
<u>Observers:</u>	Elizabeth Trinder	<i>Defra</i>
	Sarah Peters	<i>Department for Health and Social Care</i>
	Noel Nelson	<i>Met Office</i>

ABRIDGED MINUTES

ITEM 1: Welcome and Introductions:

- 1.1. Members, observers, and the secretariat were welcomed to the meeting.
- 1.2. Minister Churchill was invited to provide her perspective on the value and focus of the AQIS review. The minister responded positively to the steering group's work and the range of organisations represented in the membership and highlighted the importance of accessible communication with the public.
- 1.3. All actions from the last meeting are progressing - Asthma+Lung UK confirmed commitment to representing a diversity of vulnerable groups via their wider advisory network.

ITEM 2: Intelligence Update:

- 2.1. Members shared relevant updates:
- 2.2. AQIS was discussed at the Air Quality Expert Group (AQEG) meeting of January 19th.
 - AQEG members are supportive of the review.
 - Their members request that any asks of the expert group are clearly defined.
 - AQEG view their likely contribution to be in advising how existing data and tools can be better utilised.
- 2.3. The Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants (COMEAP) raised the AQIS review in their recent strategy meeting:
 - COMEAP's contribution likely to be around review of health evidence and Daily Air Quality Index (DAQI) thresholds.
 - The chair of COMEAP flagged that emerging evidence around exercising during high air pollution episodes may have relevance to AQIS review. It was noted that the European Space Agency are carrying out relevant work in this area.
- 2.4. The Greater London Authority (GLA) Health Summit took place on February 17th.
 - The summit brought together representatives from national, regional and local government and the health system to agree next steps in taking forward actions to address the concerns raised by the coroner following the inquest into the death of Ella Adoo-Kissi-Debrah.
 - The Chief Medical Officer (CMO) was in attendance. The CMO's independent report on air pollution is due for publication this year.
- 2.5. The UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Clean Air Programme annual conference will take place 5th-7th April with a focus on air quality communications. Steering group members were invited to register to attend: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/the-spf-clean-air-programme-seeking-solutions-for-clean-air-tickets-242828696167>.

ITEM 3: Feedback on Existing Air Quality Information System:

- 3.1. Members were asked to prepare for this agenda item by testing out a number of air quality information sources including (but not limited to) UK-Air and the DAQI, and considering strengths and limitations of current information provision.
- 3.2. Members identified two distinct but interrelated elements of the air quality information system:
 1. Air quality alerts (messages/advice triggered by specific air quality conditions);
 2. The wider air quality information (general messaging and public/professional awareness).Both are important to get right and in scope of this review.

- 3.3. Comments on what makes an effective information system - and limitations of the present system - centred around three themes of accessibility: appropriateness and impact:

Accessibility:

- Anecdotally, members found low level of subscribers to local alert systems amongst their constituents.
- Issues were identified around lack of awareness and signposting from health professionals to information sources.
- Members described a poor user experience with relevant information difficult to find.
- Lack of relevant channels to communicate with harder to reach groups – e.g. digitally excluded, groups lacking English language skills – consider an issue with current system.
- The steering group also commented that air quality is rarely taught in schools past primary education.

Appropriateness:

- Lack of data granularity (i.e. street level pollution forecasts) may limit the options people have to adjust their behaviour.
- Health advice may be outdated – there was some concern that advice around outdoor exercise may dissuade people from exercising at all – causing greater harm in the long term.
- Lack of consistency between different sources of air quality information/forecasts may damage public trust.
- The current system does not communicate air quality risks from multiday episodes effectively.
- There is a significant gap between current DAQI thresholds and updated WHO guidelines.
- Health advice puts onus on at risk individuals to change behaviour.

Impact:

- Lack of evidence on to what extent individuals change their behaviour based on current alert system.
- Central and local government may not be the most appropriate and trusted messenger.
- Overly technical and unrelatable information may reduce engagement and therefore impact.

- 3.4. Asthma+Lung UK provided relevant findings from a survey of their members:
- 41% of respondents indicated they check Met Office air quality forecast daily and 13% do so several times a week.
 - 66% never check the UK-Air website.
 - More than 90% never check UK Government twitter accounts for air quality information.

- 3.5. A more detailed summary of members' points have been summarised into document *AQIS_SG03_01_Summary of Feedback*.

ITEM 4: What Might an Improved Air Quality Information System Look Like?

- 4.1. The steering group discussed elements that an improved air quality information system should include. The following suggestions were broadly agreed upon:
- Health advice should be clear, actionable and evidence based. Any provision of health advice should consider all round wellbeing and be tested to avoid unintended adverse consequences.
 - Any revision to DAQI thresholds should consider what the desired outcome of alerting the public is, and how frequency of alert may impact behaviour change. There may be a role for AQEG and COMEAP in determining relevant pollutants and concentrations.
 - The AQIS review should consider who the trusted messengers are for air quality information and how government can work with trusted stakeholders to disseminate a consistent message.

- Timely and accurate air quality information should be accessible to all – considering different language and accessibility needs.
- Messaging should be consistent across the whole of the UK.
- Consideration should be given to how the air quality story sits with other public health and environmental agendas (e.g. obesity strategy; net zero).

ITEM 5: Potential Commissions:

- 5.1. The chair led a brief discussion about possible commissions arising from points raised in agenda items 4 and 5.
- 5.2. It was agreed that the chairs of COMEAP and AQEG should meet to discuss what a programme of work to update the DAQI might look like.
- 5.3. The steering group considered there would be value in identifying simple principles to reduce personal exposure and contribution to air pollution.
- 5.4. Early consideration should be given to evaluating the impact of any improvements made to the air quality information system.
- 5.5. It was flagged that the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities is currently conducting a piece of qualitative research to better understand public perceptions to air quality related issues.
- 5.6. Members were keen to invite Global Action Plan to present findings from their ongoing work with health professionals, looking at ways to integrate air quality conversations into patient pathways.

ITEM 6: Next Steps and AOB:

- 6.1. The chair briefly summarised the actions to be completed ahead of the next steering group meeting
- 6.2. UKHSA flagged that they would be publicising the AQIS review in the upcoming [Chemicals, Hazards and Poisons Report](#). Members confirmed that they were comfortable being named on AQIS related comms.
- 6.3. No further items of AOB raised.

**Air Quality Information Systems (AQIS) Steering Group Secretariat
March 2022**