

# AIR QUALITY INFORMATION SYSTEM REVIEW STEERING GROUP

## MEETING FOUR: MINUTES

Monday 11<sup>TH</sup> July 2022  
14:00-16:30

VIRTUAL MEETING via Microsoft Teams

<b><u>ATTENDANCE</u></b>		
<b><u>Chair:</u></b>	Bill Parish	<i>Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)</i>
<b><u>Members:</u></b>	Rob Day Anna Hansell  John Newington Matthew Clarke Gillian Mawdsley Karen Exley Kirsty Smallbone	<i>Asthma + Lung UK Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants (COMEAP) Defra Hertfordshire County Council Lay Representative UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) University of Brighton</i>
<b><u>Secretariat:</u></b>	Shaun Brace Sarah Haley Stuart Aldridge Naomi Earl Lisa Zhang	<i>Defra Defra UKHSA UKHSA UKHSA</i>
<b><u>Observers:</u></b>	Jonathan Biggs Matthew Hort Sarah Robertson	<i>Defra Met Office UKHSA</i>
<b><u>Apologies:</u></b>	Ally Lewis Andrew Grieve Jo Feary	<i>Air Quality Expert Group Imperial College London Respiratory Consultant</i>

## **ABRIDGED MINUTES**

### **ITEM 1: Welcome and Introductions:**

- 1.1. Members, observers, and the secretariat were welcomed to the meeting.
- 1.2. All actions from the last meeting are progressing. No comments were raised on the actions.

### **ITEM 2: Intelligence Update:**

- 2.1. Members shared relevant updates:
- 2.2. The Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants (COMEAP) is preparing statements on the new WHO guidelines and the Environment Act consultation. The dementia report is set to be released for the week commencing July 25<sup>th</sup>.
- 2.3. The Air Quality Expert Group (AQEG) indoor air quality report is due to be completed before the end of August.
- 2.4. Minister Churchill has stepped down as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Agri-Innovation and Climate Adaptation, a new Defra Minister will be appointed. Ministerial changes will not affect the delivery of the AQIS project.
- 2.5. AQIS was mentioned at the Public Accounts Committee hearing into tackling local air quality breaches and in a second reading in a Private Members Bill in the House of Lords.
- 2.6. Global Action Plan (GAPs) work with GPs will come to a conclusion in the Autumn. Output engagement is planned, and the steering group will have first sight of this.

### **ITEM 3: Update from Workstream 2:**

- 3.1. The steering group was presented with *AQIS\_SG04\_01\_AQIS Modelling Short Review* - a summary paper from the workstream 2 expert round table (held via teams June 14<sup>th</sup>).
- 3.2. The workstream 2 meeting brought together modelling experts from the Met Office, National Centre for Atmospheric Science, University of York, Imperial College London and the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts to discuss current air pollution models and associated data, with a focus on strengths, limitations and any potential opportunities to enhance the usefulness of information provided to the public.
- 3.3. The summary paper drafted based on the discussion and will be discussed at the next AQEG meeting to check if anything has been overlooked.
- 3.4. Steering group members queried the work strand's shorter-term deliverables and longer-term objectives.
- 3.5. One possible short-term win identified was to explore alternative uses for emissions data.
- 3.6. Possible longer-term objectives discussed included higher resolution forecasts and integration of data into mobile apps.

### **ITEM 4: Discussion and Decision-making Session for Workstream 1:**

4.1. The secretariat presented slide pack *AQIS\_SG04\_02\_Workstream 1 Discussion\_Slides* from the workstream 1 meeting (held via teams 14<sup>th</sup> June) which summarised the evidence needs for this workstream.

4.2. The slides presented included the addition of the following questions to stimulate discussion around a possible commission reviewing updates in the health evidence base since the previous DAQI review in 2011:

*Question 1: Is the DAQI's categorisation of placing individuals into two groups ('general population' and 'at risk groups') the best approach in light of evidence that has arisen in the last 10 years?*

- a) *is it right that there should be different categories of advice for the general public and for at risk groups?*
- b) *if so, is our advice to at risk groups targeted at the right groups and is it right that all "at risk" individuals should be categorised together*
- c) *are there any other vulnerable groups that should receive different advice?*
- d) *should at risk groups receive air quality alerts / advice based on different thresholds to the general public? (is "low" the same for everyone?)*

*Question 2: Currently the DAQI advice for air pollution episodes relates to carrying out strenuous exercise and the use of reliver inhalers - is this still the best advice that we can offer considering evidence that has arisen in the last 10 years? Is there other advice we should be thinking about?*

4.3. The chair requested that members use this session to identify what the focus of a commissioned evidence review should be.

4.4. Steering group members were advised that COMEAP have had an initial look at the evidence base and agree there are a number of areas where a review would be useful, but search terms would require careful thought.

4.5. It was suggested that a sub-group of COMEAP, along with workstream 1 members may have a role reviewing and editing a technical specification if this work is commissioned.

4.6. Referring to questions 1a, b & c; the steering group highlighted improving the DAQI would mean defining the different vulnerable groups and understanding whether there is a case for targeting different messages for different groups, and it was agreed that a rapid evidence assessment would be a pragmatic way to determine this.

4.7. There was some discussion about the relative merits of communicating air pollution information as one universal message to the general public versus more nuanced messaging to specific groups. This discussion centred on the trade-off between getting a simple and wide-reaching message out to begin shifting behaviour on the one hand, and better meeting the needs of vulnerable groups in protecting their health in the immediate term. It was agreed that qualitative work would be important to support the more quantitative evidence in order to address some of this complexity.

4.8. It was noted that The Public Weather Service Customer Group commissioned a review into the health services that the Met Office reports (UV, pollen, air quality) that may contain relevant insights.

4.9. It was suggested that a comparative study looking at what can be learnt about the pros/cons of targeted messaging from other areas beyond air quality and from other countries might be helpful.

4.10. Referring to question 2; it was agreed that an evidence review into the advice given during air pollution episodes would be useful. This might be commissioned as a separate piece of work.

- 4.11. It was noted that a review into the evidence around air pollution and exercise carried out by the University of Leicester was presented to COMEAP members during the meeting on March 30th. Members agreed there was scope to build on this work. It was fed back that the sort of studies included would require some thought. COMEAP suggested focusing on chamber studies might be useful.
- 4.12. The group agreed a series of next steps:
- The Secretariat will draft a technical specification. Based on discussions it is likely a number of pieces of work will need to be commissioned and funding will be prioritised accordingly, where possible these pieces of work will be run in parallel.
  - A working group comprised of a sub-group of COMEAP members plus the workstream 1 members will review the technical specification(s).

#### **ITEM 5: Call for Evidence:**

- 5.1. Members considered a proposition to circulate a call for evidence to map out the existing evidence base and ensure work is not replicated.
- 5.2. It was agreed that the call for evidence could be drafted similar to AQEG's Covid-19 call for evidence – members were invited to view document *AQIS\_SG04\_03\_Example Call for Evidence* for reference.
- 5.3. It was suggested that the call for evidence questions will relate to each of the five workstreams.

#### **ITEM 6: Air Quality Qualitative Research Presentation:**

- 6.1. The secretariat presented slide pack *AQIS\_SG04\_04\_OHID Air Pollution Qualitative Research Slides\_(OHID)* - findings from air pollution attitudinal research commissioned by the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID).
- 6.2. Two points particularly resonated with the steering group:
- The researchers' suggestion that the public will be more inspired to change personal behaviour if they are reassured that individual actions are part of a wider collective effort.
  - The researchers' recommendation that framing around vehicle emissions should be positive – encouraging individuals towards active travel, rather than telling people to not use their cars.

#### **ITEM 7: Publicising the AQIS Review:**

- 7.1. Members were advised that information about AQIS has been published on UK-Air <https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/research/aq-system-review> and referenced in the latest Chemicals, Hazards and Poisons report <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/chemical-hazards-and-poisons-report-issue-28>.
- 7.2. Members were asked to provide feedback from their networks.
- 7.3. It was noted that other (non-health) non-profits are conducting work on communicating air quality, particularly around how communities can play a role in improving awareness.

#### **ITEM 8: Next Steps and AOB:**

- 8.1. The chair briefly summarised the actions to be completed ahead of the next steering group meeting.
- 8.2. No items of AOB raised.

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