

Transport, Environment & Climate Change Select Committee – 30 March 2023

Agenda Item 4 – Public Questions

Question One

Section 3 of today's Air Quality Report draws attention to monitoring PM_{2.5} the pollutant now considered the most dangerous to human health. Will Buckinghamshire Council now start monitoring this pollutant in our most built-up areas and close to schools, and what is their timetable for doing this?

Answer

The Environment Act 2021 introduced a new target for Defra to adhere to in respect to PM_{2.5}. Defra are still in the process of producing the necessary technical guidance for Local Authorities detailing how they would like Local Authorities to work with Defra in order to reach this target. We are expecting the guidance in May/June 2023 and we are hopeful this may provide the framework PM_{2.5} monitoring requirements and strategy for local authorities.

In the meantime, we are rolling out one multi-pollutant sensor, which will monitor NO₂, PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}, to each Community Board within Buckinghamshire. They are not as accurate as the reference method equipment that are recommended by Defra (e.g. diffusion tubes and continuous monitors) but are far lower in cost and provide a good indicator of trends present. Currently the Community Boards are locating their sensors outside schools. This will therefore provide valuable real time data to show what impact school traffic, including idling, has on the local air quality present outside of the school.