

Boris Johnson
Mayor of London
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London
SE1 2AA

Date: 27 August 2010

Dear Mayor,

Air Quality Strategy

Thank you for your specific responses to the Assembly's comments on the draft air quality strategy. The Committee welcomes the improvements that have been made to the strategy in response to the Committee's recommendations, particularly the information about health impacts of air pollution, the effect of the strategy and the priority locations measures.

There are a few further points still to address.

1. Implementation plans and funding

As your response makes clear, the GLA is still seeking firm plans from national government in order to include in the strategy complete implementation timetables, costs and funding proposals.

It is also clear, from the responses to this consultation of London Councils and TfL, that funding could be an issue for the many actions to which boroughs and TfL are required to contribute.

Also the strategy shows that, taking into account natural fleet turnover and the GLA actions in the strategy, by 2015 there will be a reduction of 10-15% in the number of roads exceeding EU limit values for NO₂, with further action needed to bring the remaining roads within the limit by that date. The strategy points to the role of national government in addressing NO₂ as a national issue, and also the role of local councils in areas of high concentration.

Therefore the recommendations in the Committee's original response, that the strategy should include implementation timetables and funding plans, stand. The Committee supports your call to the Government to provide the necessary input. Nonetheless, the Committee maintains its expectation that, given the Government actions as they emerge, the strategy should deliver the pollutant concentration reductions necessary for Londoners' health.

2. Work with local authorities

The revised draft makes further acknowledgement of the need to work with boroughs to deliver many of the proposals, and contains a proposal that in general terms outlines some processes by which boroughs will be encouraged and advised. However, this area would benefit from further clarity, and agreed actions or at least concrete proposals.

London Councils' response to the consultation, agreed on 22 July, says that "There are numerous references... to working with boroughs as a main way of implementing proposals. Whilst we are keen to work with the Mayor... the Mayor needs to make clear the practical and resource implications of how this will be achieved and what his expectations of boroughs are. The point was raised in the previous draft, but remains vague in the public draft... The strategy would therefore benefit from clearer proposals as to how the Mayor intends to work with boroughs... such as through a memorandum of understanding, Member working groups or similar... At the very least, commitment to develop an action plan urgently is needed within the strategy to ensure many of the 'work with boroughs'/'lobby government' – type proposals can succeed."

Therefore the recommendation in the Committee's original response, that the strategy should make clear how local government will be incentivised and enabled to take action, stands.

3. Timescales for figures on NO₂ concentrations

The Committee recommended that the strategy should show how the EU limit values for NO₂ concentration limits would be met in 2010. Your response declines this recommendation, on the grounds, already given to the Committee in its original discussion, that the Government is applying to the EU for a deadline extension to 2015.

The Committee remains of the view that the health impacts on Londoners mean that NO₂ concentrations should be reduced rapidly towards those limits, to meet them before 2015 if possible. It therefore welcomes the statement in your response that you are committed to meeting limit values, and tolerance margins, as soon as possible. However, the revised draft strategy does not contain concentration modelling for any period before 2015.

It is now fully clear that the limits will not be met in 2010 and that modelling for 2010 would not have currency for long, if at all, after the publication of the final strategy. Therefore, to back up your stated commitments to reductions as soon as possible, the Committee's recommendation should be interpreted to call for NO₂ concentration modelling to be presented for a date intermediate between the publication of the strategy and 2015, such as 2012 or 2013.

This point also relates to the Committee's recommendation that the strategy should show how the NO₂ margin of tolerance will be met. The intermediate modelling could show when compliance with the margin of tolerance is expected.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'DJ' followed by a long horizontal stroke.

Darren Johnson AM
Chair of the Environment Committee